
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

GoogleTM books

<https://books.google.com>





600055853W



JENNY BELL.

A Story.

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "BELLA DONNA," "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "THE LIFE OF STERNE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON :

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1866.

[The right of Translation is reserved.]

250. h. 188. Google

LONDON:
PRINTED BY C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.



INSCRIBED
TO
WALTER CREYKE, Esq.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

INTRODUCTION.

	PAGE
ROME	1

BOOK THE FIRST.

PENWILLION.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

THE NEW TOWN OF PENWILLION	21
--------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

THE GRAND HOTEL	31
---------------------------	----

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

JENNY BELL	40
----------------------	----

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

THE PENWILLION MORNING	54
----------------------------------	----

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

THE BATHING	64
-----------------------	----

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

COLONEL BOWYER	80
--------------------------	----

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

AN EXPLOIT	90
----------------------	----

VOL. I.

"

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.	
	PAGE
THE LEPELLS	101
CHAPTER THE NINTH.	
JENNY'S ENEMY	129
CHAPTER THE TENTH.	
FRIENDS TO THE RESCUE	142
CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.	
THE MANAGER'S DEFEAT	161
CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.	
MRS. LONG OF EATON	181
CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.	
TWO STRINGS	205
CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.	
WATERING-PLACE GOSSIP	219
CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH.	
THE PARTY TO BEN TILBURY	230
CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH.	
A FATAL MISTAKE	247
CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH.	
LEFT ALONE	262
CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH.	
HOPELESSLY IN LOVE	274
CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH.	
THE "OLD SALT"	296

JENNY BELL.

INTRODUCTION.

ROME.

FAR away at Rome, and along one of the Roman streets, a line of carriages was waiting; and four or five windows on the first floor blazed out in a row, like huge lanterns. It was about one in the morning. All the massive eaves and stone galleries and capitals which ran in perspective far down the street, stood out against a deep cold blue sky, and the patrol of half a dozen police, in their mournful cloaks, as they came round, looked up vacantly at the

VOL. I.

B

57

blazing windows : one said carelessly to his neighbour as they tramped by sadly into the darkness, "Zamperini."

It was the Zamperini Palace—one of the small Roman palaces which are not shown, having nothing to show, neither pictures nor "old stones." But it had almost a better reputation. Zamperini was an Italian, who had been to England and married an English lady, and was burly and half-English, with English tastes. He liked—perhaps more respected than really liked—the English horses and the English guns, and even the English swearing ; but the lady whom he married—a pale, classical, poetical woman, dreamy, like the Marguerite of the opera—had tastes of another sort, and managed to gather every one who had taste, skill, or genius, around her. She herself painted ; not indeed with startling power, but with an enthusiasm and elegance which carried her nearly as far. She had a charming French voice, and often had a whole opera "recited" at her house, with Brindisi, from the Opera, as tenor, and she herself as prima donna. But

as the opera worked to a close, and the joint agony which is sure to overtake tenor and soprano and involve them in sad distress, was beginning so develop itself, she would forget that she was "reciting," and, casting away her music, her pale, cold face would light up, the hair would come tumbling down, and she would be carried away with a tempest of lyric enthusiasm, and be as excited as Signora Nigri, who did "La Forza" at the "Apollo" on the Sunday night before.

This was one of her musical nights. The handsome deep-red rooms were lit up and crowded; figures that seemed all coal-black eyes and beards and inconvenient hats, abounded. Beautiful Roman ladies, who seemed to have the dress and jewels of princesses, sat in rows. There was a prelate or two, and that cardinal who has the most wonderful eyes in the world—eyes that redeem a mouth not so good—and from under whose gown came occasionally an ankle which, as a feature, deserved a glance also. There were many English, a little out of their element, and "herding" a good

deal together for confidence and protection. The night was nearly done, and the concert about two-thirds over. There were four or five of these scarlet rooms, one or two very small, and which seemed to follow each other irregularly. In one there was a statue in an alcove; and in a second there were cabinets with daggers and china; and the guests wandered from one to the other. Two Englishmen, with opera-hats, came languidly into one of these, where they were quite alone, and dropped with weariness on the sofa. One was a tall, heavily-built man, with black hair and black heavy moustache. The other was pale, and rather full-faced, with his lips and mouth running into the shape of the regular "Cupid's bow," and without—perhaps for this very reason—any moustache. He had a small but "fine" throat, with a low fall collar—perhaps to show it—and his hair was divided in the middle. His name was Charles Russell; he was brother to Sir William, and was in the "Diplomacy."

His heavy friend was beating the corner of the sofa with his opera-hat.

“So you go to-morrow?” he said.

He was Mr. Harding, of the Life Guards, and was often remarked, as he came up Regent-street with the regiment, on his black glossy Flemish dray, which could carry fifteen stone easily.†

“Yes,” said the other, carelessly; “it is quite time, and I am getting tired of the place. Rome is all very well for a month; and besides——”

“I know,” said the other, “you are wanted—they are expecting you.”

“Well, that has something to do with it,” said Russell. “I have been promising and putting off. There was this ball and that party. Even my mother said I ought to be thinking of it.”

“It seems so odd, you know,” said the other—“the idea of your being married. I should have thought you’d have been knocking about all your life—from one legation to another——”

“Well, a wife should make no difference,” said the other, quietly; “one can knock about, as you call it, with her just as well—or, rather, there must come a term to this

knocking about. I hope soon to have done with it altogether."

"They are cousins, are they, these Lepells?" the other asked.

"A sort of cousins. Their father is my cousin, in a sort of way. One of the most *interesting* men you ever met—with a simplicity about him that is charming. *Your* men would, of course, write him down an ass, because he can't talk slang, and stare, and be indifferent to everything. But even in getting through the world he could be wiser than any of you—if he chose. That is the true character to admire, Mr. Harding—the simplicity that comes *not* from inexperience or ignorance, but from a knowledge of the world—the *gaucherie* that comes from being *blasé* with town delights——"

"I don't keep up with you, my dear friend," said the Life Guardsman, putting up his glass. "By-and-by I shall make it out, I dare say. What's her name—*your* one?"

"*My* one," said the other, smiling; "that's a funny description. Lucy. They

are both charming and both very little—about the same height ; as demure as two little nuns ; grave, yet I am sure can *understand* fun (I hate your koiden and jolly girls), and so earnest and devotional and simple, it is quite delightful——”

Harding put his glass in his eye, and made up a gathering of wrinkles to hold it there. “But these are the two,” he said, wondering——“which is yours?”

The other looked absently on the ground. “Well—did you ever remark,” he said, “how often it happens with two sisters that one reflects something on to the other and fills in what is wanting? Suddenly you take one away, and the other fades down, as if you had taken her from the stage into the daylight.”

“On that principle, one should marry both sisters,” said his friend.

“I dare say it will turn out something in that way,” said the other. “However, I am prepared for everything. I have had enough of the knocking about, as you call it. For a man to be a vagabond all his life is dis-

reputable. I want to settle down and be useful, and become public. Brother William has a seat which he can give me in a year or two. I want to encamp in London, regularly—have a house, give dinners, and see the witty and wise there. You cannot do that without a lady for the house. Mind, I had no such practical idea in choosing my faithful little nun of a cousin. I am not one of your mess fellows, who think it smart to be letting off their vulgarities at the expense of girls, as if they were like Turkish women. I think there is nothing more low and degrading than those airs of patronage.”

“All right,” said his friend, quietly; “we do talk in that way sometimes. But I say, Charley, how you do hit out at our men; you are always at it. Some of us are not up to the mark; but the best of us *know* no better, and mean well.”

“You must settle all that with each other,” said Mr. Russell, quietly.

“Ah! but I don’t see it all yet,” said Harding, rolling himself on the ottoman.

"Your mother—Lady Russell—how could she like all this? Why, I recollect she was all for Lady Julia Hammond, and the connexion, and that sort of thing."

"That was a surprise to me too," said the other. "She fancied the little girls; and I never was so astonished as when she proposed it to me herself. Here she is now."

A pale lady, that had been handsome, and who had now a refined look, but with a firm and decided manner, entered the room hastily—

"Ah! you are here," she said; "I have been looking for you. Come, Madame Zamperini is going to sing her French song; you know you asked her to do so."

The two gentlemen rose and followed her into the music-room. The fair-haired lady of the house was a little in front of the piano, with her eyes upon the door. Some one was at the piano, to accompany her. The bearded men, with the inconvenient hats, had gathered in a semicircle; some putting their limbs into the attitudes of old classical

statues—limbs, however, hidden in trousers. Madame Zamperini saw the two gentlemen enter, and began at once.

It was charming. It was acted as well as sung. Her voice was as flexible, rather far more flexible, than a flute; which, in average hands, is stiff and intractable. It was a little bit of dramatic melody—by Adam, or Grisar, or Thomas, the Watteaus of music—was called “Monsieur le Caporal!” and was full of musical laughter. It had the gay open-air tone of good French comic music, and had a laughing “refrain.”

The lady who sang, performed it with infinite grace, and daring, and piquancy; and mocked and jeered “M. le Caporal” with a musical hilarity that was quite infectious. These little musical sketches are as gay and spirited in their way—with more elegance, however—as the croquis of Cham, or the Molière sketches of Tony Johannot.

Paintings by this lady were on the walls all round. In a room far to the back was what she called her studio; and where she

had received the more famous sculptors to look at her "Boy at the Brook," and other works. She was an artist. The black-bearded men bowed over their hats as she crossed the room to Mr. Russell.

"Brava! brava!" said he, patting his hands together as if he were applauding. "There is something for one to take away,—something to ring in my ears as I go down to Civita Vecchia, and see the domes and columns fade out of sight. Charming! done!"

She almost spoke earnestly. "So you must leave," she said; "and where do you go to first?"

"Paris; and from Paris to a strange little green corner of the earth—Spabad—where people drink horrible waters and ride ponies, and put down money on green baize."

"I know," said she; "and they are to meet you there. I see."

"Yes," he answered, smiling; "I am to have one last holiday,—just as we saw that modest novice the other day, at the convent, with her friends, and flowers, and cakes."

Then for school and business, and sober practical life."

"And the sober practical life will drive out all the pleasant recollections of Spabad, just as it will do those of Rome."

"Rome!" he said, "ah, never! Do you know what I did to-day? I was in a shop near the Treves fountain, and I sent over the man for a tumbler, and drank it, too. There's romance—romance for blasé hardened me!"

Mr. Russell talked a little loud and despotically—as Englishmen abroad are entitled to do; but he seemed to be unconscious that there were other people in the room, or if there were, that it was their duty to gather round, listen, and admire. His white face, circled with large and very glossy whiskers, was a contrast to the swarthy greenish tones of many faces, and of many glossy moustaches that were bent forward near and round him. Their voices were soft, low, and mysterious.

"But," said Madame Zamperini, "why go so soon? Surely no dreadful telegrams have come. I had a thousand things to ask you—to consult you about; a picture—

verses—and you rush away in this extravagant manner.”

“My dear Mrs. Zamperini,” he said, half seriously as it seemed, “if I were to stay, I should stay indefinitely. I had to choose between a day and a year. These rooms are caves of Circe, *en suite*. I must fly. Even my mother thinks I have been long enough. But I shall be ‘humming’ the ‘Caporal’ for the next month. There, she is going,—they are all going, I think. I must say good-bye, and a thousand genuine thanks, dear Mrs. Zamperini, for all your goodness, and for the many happy hours I have spent in this room !”

They were going. A train of the Italian men, keeping fast hold of the hats to the end, came twisting and contorting themselves up to the hostess, languishing out to a mystic half complaint, half good night. The prelates and the cardinal glided out. There was the rustle of rising, departing silks. The English made their adieux noisily and heartily—as their manner is under all circumstances.

“Last night !” said Colonel Gully, cheer-

fully, a little in front of Mrs. Gully. "Quite sorry, I assure you. Ha! he! Delighted, indeed—charming concert! Go down to Chivyter Vekkier in the morning! Good night,—*good night!*"

In the grand architectural street outside were many carriage-lamps which flamed fiercely, with many heavy swinging lumbering coaches. The gentlemen came out under the archway. There was a clatter as of letting down steps in a tier, after the ancient manner, and a flash, as pink, red, or blue, and bright beauty ascended in a moment, and was shut in. The never-wearying patrol, in the funeral pyramidal cloaks, were coming round again sadly.

Charles Russell came out, leaning on his friend's arm, to walk home. Each had taken out the never-failing friend of man—not the dog—but the little case, which holds the best of inanimate companions. They walked on together through the massive Roman streets, where every second house is a palace, broken up with shadows from pillars and carvings and balconies, recesses and porticos. He seemed to take up the

rain of thought where he had dropped it in the little inner room.

"I was thinking of that little Lucy this very night, as Mrs. Zamperini was speaking to me—of her trusting face, and sweet honest eyes."

"Why, my goodness!" said Harding, taking his cigar out. "How you puffed and complimented her. In fact, I always thought you had rather a weakness, as we might call it—and no shame in it, for she is really a fine——"

"Oh, that sort of thing is expected, you know, especially in our profession. I am not one of those candid boors who are truthful at the expense of politeness and delicacy. No. It is all very well, you know. She is, of course, a charming, cultivated creature, and I *do* admire her."

Harding was a plain, honest creature, whose face was all over strong glossy and very wiry black hair, which straggled and encroached every day, and gave him infinite trouble when shaving. He could not see very well, and the upper region of his face was always struggling to hold fast his

and spouts the water monotonously. Russell sighed.

“It is a scene in the opera,” he said; “Rome is a perfect Theatre. When I leave, I feel as hopelessly melancholy as I did at the end of my first play.”

“Well! I always tell the truth,” said the other, “and I can find nothing in it. It’s not a patch upon London. These pictures and galleries and old cellars are very well. Spillman, indeed, is something—the *best*,” added he, with fervour, “fellow of the kind I *ever* met with. Everything so good. Perhaps, after all, I might turn up there, at that place, one of these days.”

They were now at their hotel, and wished each other good night. In the morning came the departure; the most melancholy of departures is that from Rome. The day was lovely. The churches and the familiar monuments seemed to bask in the calm sunshine, with all the peaceful tranquillity of old age. Then came the “scramble” at the railway; the hurry and the tumbling of the heavy chests and trunks of the thirty or forty departing passengers, with as much

noise and flurry and confusion as if a regiment was being sent away. Then came the sunny town of Civita Vecchia—so quaint and so Italian ; as yellow as one of Claude's Ports—where lay the packet. And thus, Charles Russell, Secretary of Legation at Würtemberg, a " rising young man," set off from Rome on his way to Spabad, where he was to meet the young girl he was to marry. With whom, too, he was to travel home to London a month or two later, and be united to, at Hymen's fashionable chapel, with a crowd of delighted persons of quality looking on.

eye-glass. "It's a most incomprehensible thing, and I never can follow," he said.

"Perhaps so," said his friend. "But you have no idea how hollow all this sort of thing becomes after a time. It is like dining out at great dinners every day. You sicken of them. I want hearts and homes, and warmth, and eyes of affection. Don't you understand?"

"But, Lady Russell——"

"Oh, my mother, of course; very proper to remind me. But she has her duties as well as her rights; must manage the connexions of the family. *Her* hands are quite full, without adding hearths and homes. My dear Harding, it comes to this; I want the warmer latitudes of affection. Johnson tells us a man should keep his friendship in repair, or he will find himself alone at the end of his days. And in this family, Harding, I think I am likely to find happiness and quiet."

"Why, you talk like an old man that is sick of the world."

"Well, perhaps I want a new sensation," Russell answered. "I have tried balls,

fashionable life, travelling, dissipation, what not. Everything is empty; apples of the Dead Sea. *Now*, I want to see what marriage and the domesticities are like."

"But suppose——" began his friend.

"Exactly," interrupted the other; "that would be terrible. And there would be no remedy. No, I shall be very happy. This little gentle soul will have 'trust'—will worship the strong powerful mind that has so graciously chosen her. Isn't that the view? And I'll tell you another view. It is not an 'improvident' match, as they call it. Her good father gives Lucy ten thousand pounds, and there are chances—besides, no son. It was my good mother—who is just the same as if she had been in our service—who managed it all, raised it from seven. She is very clever."

They had now got into the Via Condotti, where their hotel was. Before them rose the stair of terraces that leads up to the famous Trinita. In the front of them was the fountain, where the damp and corroded stone man lies down on his unhappy side

and spouts the water monotonously. Russell sighed.

“It is a scene in the opera,” he said; “Rome is a perfect Theatre. When I leave, I feel as hopelessly melancholy as I did at the end of my first play.”

“Well! I always tell the truth,” said the other, “and I can find nothing in it. It’s not a patch upon London. These pictures and galleries and old cellars are very well. Spillman, indeed, is something—the *best*,” added he, with fervour, “fellow of the kind I *ever* met with. Everything so good. Perhaps, after all, I might turn up there, at that place, one of these days.”

They were now at their hotel, and wished each other good night. In the morning came the departure; the most melancholy of departures is that from Rome. The day was lovely. The churches and the familiar monuments seemed to bask in the calm sunshine, with all the peaceful tranquillity of old age. Then came the “scramble” at the railway; the hurry and the tumbling of the heavy chests and trunks of the thirty or forty departing passengers, with as much

noise and flurry and confusion as if a regiment was being sent away. Then came the sunny town of Civita Vecchia—so quaint and so Italian; as yellow as one of Claude's Ports—where lay the packet. And thus, Charles Russell, Secretary of Legation at Würtemberg, a "rising young man," set off from Rome on his way to Spabad, where he was to meet the young girl he was to marry. With whom, too, he was to travel home to London a month or two later, and be united to, at Hymen's fashionable chapel, with a crowd of delighted persons of quality looking on.

racing debts, debts for tailors' and furniture bills, debts to Jew gentlemen, debts to "ladies" (for the late nobleman was much talked about for his open and costly gallantries); in short, debts for all the laborious "pleasures" in which a genteel and noble and elderly rake must graduate, if he would acquire reputation. Just, however, as the geologists had begun their borings for the slates, the dissolute nobleman died, and all sympathy became diverted to his son, the present viscount,— "the minor," as he was spoken of in the various applications to the Court made in his interest. And in lady circles particularly there was a good deal of curiosity to know how the minor was "left."

It seemed, indeed, that the worst might be anticipated, and the youth be consigned to deserved contempt, but for the exertions of a new agent, or "man of business," one Morgan, who had been appointed during the last year or so of the profligate viscount's life. Morgan was a man of steady will and purpose, and of infinite resources. It was he who had got down the geologists and discovered

the slates; it was he who let the quarry to a company on a short lease; it was he who, when the quarry showed signs of incalculable and merchantable riches, cancelled the short lease and made another on better terms for both parties; and it was Morgan who, having discovered a delicious little Welsh sea corner, sheltered by headlands—balmy as Nice in winter, bright as Sorrento in summer, healthful for bathing and boating, and tempting to the eye—conceived the bold idea of “making” the place at once, and calling up into existence the little fashionable settlement of Penwillion.

The leading idea in this ambitious scheme, was to be its costliness. It was only intended for families of good degree—families with money; and, above all, for fashionable families.

The Bishop of Hoxton and Mrs. Brindley—who were a good deal mixed up in the more correct and better sort of charities, and who exploited, as it was well known, fancy fairs and open-air festivals for ragged and other orphans, with more success as regards the real sort of attendance, than any people

in town—had known the deceased peer well, and had often remonstrated with him on his irregularities. Mrs. Brindley was, as most people knew, deep in the “Buryshaft set,” that is, intimate with the noble earl himself—the head of the house—and the Ladies Jane and Mary Swordsman, his daughters, who wrote the excellent little works on crossing-sweepers, and who were, it might be said, perpetual stall-women at all the bazaars.

A second son of Lord Buryshaft’s had intermarried with the Irish Mangertons—an excellent house—which, it is well known, brought in a large semi-devout, semi-fashionable connexion. But the point of the whole is, that the bishop and family, with one or two of the “set,” on being appealed to by Morgan, went down in the summer to the three or four stray villas in the place, and were quite delighted, making, as Mrs. Brindley said, “a little coterie of our own, dear.”

From the *Court Journal* the world soon learnt of this little raid, the charm of which lay in its utter lawlessness and irregularity,

and began looking wistfully towards Penwillion. The bishop was seen on the seashore, glistening—reflecting back the bright sun like the bits of spar and pebble on the beach. He usually wore a black “wide-awake” and loose coat, which “trimmed” ambiguously between a profane freedom about the shoulders, and a proper episcopal restraint in the collar. It soon got abroad that “the set” wished to keep this place retired and select. It also soon got abroad that the President of the Board of Trade had been down there walking about, leaning loosely on the arm of the bishop. And quite naturally the eagerness to get there became almost uncontrollable.

By the next year sixty villas had been completed, and were let. By the next year “the architect to the estate” had mapped out an elegant little town, which was to be built under regulations; and a society (limited) was hard at work building the Grand Penwillion Hotel, the Penwillion Assembly Rooms, Penwillion-terrace, Penwillion-crescent, *Brindley-row* (thus delicately repaid the kindly forethought

and early patronage of the bishop); and "the minor," it was said, when he came of age, would be one of the most opulent young nobles in the three kingdoms.

Of a bright day it was a wonderful and a tempting place. A couple of streets ran straight and parallel to the beach. Every house in these streets was as white and architectural—as Venetian as plaster could make it. Where there were little breaks and openings, when the houses were parted a moment, a screen of rich deep glowing molten blue filled up the space, and through these openings came pouring a bath of fresh, healthful, stirring breezes, that seemed almost charged with the elixir of life. And here were the fashionable confectioners, where every one luxuriated every day, and the young girls, bright as the days themselves, came with their mammas and ate many "Countesses"—a delicate and highly appreciated cake, already a speciality of the place. Here was the library, with the polite young men, whither the bright young girls and their mammas repaired—after disposing of their "Countesses"—and chose new books, or met

and talked with other bright young girls, with whom they commonly left the shop.

Here, too, were the shops and marts for fine clothes, with a spurious Madame Adelaide, who showed a good deal of plate-glass on the second story, and who carried out the little sham very successfully. And there was here an old curiosity shop, with some Nankin cups and a few of the rare old masters—for time sometimes hung heavy, and people were glad enough to lounge in and turn over the art treasures—*pour se distraire*. As the pilgrims who cross the desert, or emigrants who go out in a sailing ship, must take bedding, and cups, and pans, and everything, down to a corkscrew—so with our modern Epicureans on their travels, who require to have even the little delicacies of life sent on before and waiting for them. But between three and four, on that part of the beach which was smooth and firm, and bore the name of the Esplanade, the gayest sight the place could furnish was to be seen. It was a ride—a drive—and what not. Half a dozen streams, like strings of gay-coloured floss silk, passed

and re-passed each other. There were the ponies with the postilions in uniform, and the daintiest little chariots (at a rather costly rate by the hour), and fiery chargers (the arrangement being usually a father between his daughters, each on a fiery charger) cantering merrily, and making the gravel fly—the slowly moving perambulator—with the company sitting on the chairs—the daily packets landing company at the wooden pier—and the sailing skiffs gliding in—and the strip of grass, which was kept for a promenade, alive with all its company. And there was a sort of instinct that everybody should show themselves to the best advantage at that mystic hour. It was not to be conceived how noble the youths of the place looked in their airy straw hats—set off by a fiercely coloured ribbon—being white robed all over, and sparkling as to vest and trousers, like an army of handsome young martyrs. So with the ranks of lovely girls, who had all that firm and almost resolute manner—that cold gaze which can yet return without flinching a steadier gaze—a favourable characteristic

of the more fashionable girls of our country — and whose dress was “confectioned” under the eye of the best masters. So with the beach, where were the little ladies and little young gentlemen — who were equipped according to the most correct infant modes, and in the best taste—after the canons set by the children of *ton*, and the offspring of the nobility. The little gentlemen had, indeed, their wooden spades, with which they dug into the sand, and hoops, and other instruments of infantine délassément; but they were trained to dig genteelly, and even with grace. There, too, in the mornings, when the beach was clear (“the finest strand in Europe,” said the show-boards at railway stations all over the kingdom), rows of white sentry-boxes trundled forwards out into waves of what seemed molten cobalt and silver mixed; and there was the bivouac of matrons, and elderly men—who by courtesy were reckoned *as* matrons—and who were past all curiosity for “that sort of thing.” And from the tranquil blue came the splash—now far, now near—and the tinkle of female laughter,

and the merry shriek of affected terror. Here Venus rose from the sea over and over again—only robed in deep blue flannel—and a straggling Cupid or two, who was admitted through courtesy, was carried out by arms that seemed made of mahogany—Cupids, too, that wore no blue flannel.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

THE GRAND HOTEL.

THE Building Company, who in France would have had titles like a Spanish grandee, and been called "Société Anonyme," and have been connected with a "Crédit Foncier" or "Mobilier," had really laid their energies to the construction of the Grand Hotel, which "made up" one hundred and fifty bedrooms, private "saloons," smoking, and billiard rooms; and "combined, with these attractions," said the meretricious placards which addressed the traveller in every waiting-room in the kingdom, "the desideratum of a ladies' coffee-room."

The progress of the place was mysteriously

rapid. The Grand Hotel seemed to have shot up in a night. How it had long been known to be one of the most sheltered and salubrious corners in England, and was specially suited to the "rapid and efficacious cure of pulmonary affections of long standing"—how Doctor Dee, in his agreeable book, "Our Bathers and Our Bathing Places," had in his pleasant way called it "the Parasol of England"—how the "stream of visitors" was almost hourly increasing, and how Professor Micklethwaite, of the Geological Society, had been down there with his rods and hammers, and had discovered the tertiary strata, and all kinds of strata, making it the very centre of all the more desirable fossils, and had gone out in a boat and found abundance of "jelly fishes" and "marine algæ," and a dreadfully interesting cave, where you went with a boat and torches, and actually slipped on these oily creatures of the deep,—these things all became known very speedily, and brought the place into deserved reputation.

The hotel was certainly a prodigy of architectural magnificence, and went about as

far as the known extravagance of plaster would admit. It was designed by the well-known architect, Jenkinson — sometimes playfully called “middle-aged Jenkinson” among his brethren, from his successful carrying out of the “feeling” of the mediæval times. The result was a building that seemed to have as many “facets” as a well-cut diamond, that ran riot in gables, sentry-boxes, towers, belfries where there were no bells—that ran in and out—that went up and down—that had no two windows in a line—that had no two windows of a size or shape—that was embroidered all over with confectionery—that had a roof with nearly as many windows as there were in the body of the building—that had little balconies here, there, and everywhere—that was, in short, a perfect triumph of “middle-aged Jenkinson’s” skill.

At the railway station were to be seen the chromo pictures of this edifice, with a flag flying and the noble guests looking out of the windows, sitting on the steps in the sun, driving about the walks in carriages, or

sailing on the blue sea close by, in the yachts of the establishment.

Round about the Versailles palace, "middle-aged Jenkinson," the architect, had allowed his brush and water-colours to ramble into Watteau scenes, terraces, gardens, bosquets, where the guests residing seemed to enjoy almost exquisite happiness, and seemed also to be persons of superior rank, and to wear robes, and not dresses strictly.

In this fashion the new watering-place hotel began to be present to the public mind. In not many months the contractors were at work, and in not many months the great roofs of green slate were got on and "pierced" for guns, the balls and pinnacles, and innumerable weathercocks and metallic foliage were glittering in the sun, all bright with new gilding.

The new parade hotel was now open, the tariff was nailed up in every bedroom, guests were swarming and humming in clusters about the doors and windows as though it was a grand New Glass Hive Company (Limited), and had just been opened by the bees. But they were utterly unlike

the Watteau groups of *insouciant* courtiers and Louis Quatorze ladies whom Mr. Jenkinson had scattered among his gardens and fountains. They seemed, indeed, a rather rude and earthy company as to dress, and "middle-aged Jenkinson" dared not have introduced into his drawing the fat Briton in the grey suit lying on an iron garden-seat reading a great newspaper, with his large leg stretched out and terminated by a slipper.

The spacious "salle à manger" seemed to be in the open air, so many were the windows and bow-windows, whence the guests could almost walk out into a rich blue waste, on which bright and tiny specks floated all day long. There was the army of waiters dressed like gentlemen, with a deportment subdued to an almost medical confidence.

Here, in this great room, where are the monster tea-machines in full work, were many white waistcoats of great girth, on which lay golden cables, which, though attached to wives and many daughters, were, to the hotel eye, objects of greater interest and even beauty. For every week, white waist-

coats and gold cables came to "James Bird, manager," to talk to "Bird" about yesterday's dinner, and to hear from "Bird" when they were to have some of that fine Welsh salmon again; and talk about the season and about who were coming. And then from a pocket under the white waistcoat came notes and sovereigns, and "Bird's bill" was paid. It was wonderful how many of these useful representative men were in the house. As we look down the long tables of the "salle à manger" at dinner-time, they seem to be marked out at intervals by recurring bald and grey heads. As we look down, too, we can see the youths sitting with their sisters, and of much more mark here than in their domestic mansions; and stout mammas, very busy with "Bird's" good things, and looking out restlessly for the next locomotive dish; and the stray wandering men, who are shy, or who have no skill, and who are not treated by Bird with the respect and fetish worship he pays to "A Family." For "a family" is really Bird's neighbour whom he loves as himself. They even

publish in Penwillion a bi-weekly newspaper called the *Penwillion Courant*, on the fourth page of which you will find the "Guide," or list of strangers, with at least a column devoted to the Grand Hotel, which properly leads the way. And with this useful direction in our hand, we might travel down the whole table, and see who was staying in the house.

Bird could tell them off to us pleasantly, as, indeed, he did to Mr. Boxer, a leading and portly white waistcoat, and domestic paymaster of forces.

Bird had the quietest manner in the world. "We are very full indeed, sir, just at present; but to-morrow, sir, I can promise you those rooms. That is Admiral Hozier, sir, at the top of the table, and Mrs. Hozier, and the admiral's brother, Captain Hozier, who is home from the East, sir. We have Lord Walmer here, and his lordship's family; his eldest son, Lord Gravesend, from Oxford, sir. Bishop Hornblower, of the Mauritius, left us only last night. Oh, very full, sir, indeed; we had to turn away people last evening. I have a letter here

from Sir Charles Fowler, who has come to us regularly since the opening, and I assure you it was only yesterday I was able to write to him to say I could take him in. I have advised the Company to add during the autumn. They will have to do it, sir, and I told them so at the beginning. They generally follow me in most things. I set the thing going, in fact. It don't become me, sir, to speak; but there is something in connexion. I brought them connexion, sir. Yes, sir, we have had Colonel Bowyer here these three weeks. He expects his brother, Lord Wimpole, here the day after to-morrow. The colonel knows everybody, sir. The elderly lady? Yes, sir. *She* has our best sitting-room; first of the four bow-windows; widow of Admiral Sandwich, long known on the Carribee Station. *She* comes to us every year since the opening, sir; and Mrs. Tollemache, from Ireland, Sir Patrick's mother."

Mr. Boxer became hot under his waist-coat, as this "douche" of quality was turned full on him. He told Mrs. Boxer and the

Miss Boxers such of the names as he could recollect, with all the airs of original information. "We have fall'n on our legs, Mrs. B.," he said. "We have come to the right shop for *our* money."

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

JENNY BELL.

THIS was after breakfast, when the guests were coming down the great stairs in good and bad spirits too—dropping one by one out of the breakfast-room — lighting the morning cigar. Mr. Boxer stood with his hands on his Bristol-board waistcoat, watching them go by with the natural, unsophisticated curiosity of a stranger. “Hist ! hist ! Bird,” he said at last, and nudged that official. “I say, now ?” and he nodded his head at a retiring lady in a hat, who stole past them.

In the sweetest and most reverent of

voices this lady said "Good morning, Mr. Bird—how do you do to-day?"

Mr. Bird merely bowed. She was not a family.

"Countess—eh?" Mr. Boxer said, repeating his nudge.

"No, no, sir," said Mr. Bird, without any heraldic enthusiasm, "only a person that has been staying here a long time." (This was not a very specific description, for it applied to many others who were both "persons," and had been staying a good while.)

"I see—I see," said Mr. Boxer; "not quite the tiptop—I know."

"She is by her—er—self," said Mr. Bird, with embarrassment. "I don't quite see it, sir." Then he recollected that she was a guest, and so far supported a fraction of the credit of the house. "Of course a very well-conducted person, and all that. But our connexion is mostly families—*families*, sir" — and he looked with reverence at the Bristol-board waistcoat as standing for "family" in the abstract. Mr. Boxer felt that *he* stood for family, and enlarged his waistcoat intuitively.

Presently the gliding young lady stole back.

"Did Mrs. Sandwich go out, Mr. Bird? I am so distressed——"

"A few minutes ago—just after breakfast—towards the beach, I believe," said Mr. Bird, quietly.

"Oh, thank you—thank you!" said the young lady, as if she was saying, "Oh, my preserver! We worry you, I am afraid, with our questions, so much as *you* have to think of."

Mr. Bird only bowed. He repeated, "You'll find Mrs. Sandwich on the beach, Miss Bell."

That young lady looked at him half in doubt, as if she misunderstood him, then cast her eyes down sadly and stole away.

Two gentlemen now leaving the breakfast-room, and chewing very stout and unlit cigars, came out slowly and undecidedly, and looked with disgust at the patch of blue sea and blue air framed in the doorway. They came back and went to the door again, as if they could not make up their minds.

One was a tall man, with a soft watery eye, a black, glossy, but rather ragged moustache, and a white and sharp chin. He seemed to be worn, "used," pressed out, rusted, but still held himself together well. The other was a short man, of no mark or feature.

Mr. Bird broke suddenly from Mr. Boxer.

"Light, Colonel Bowyer—waiting for a light? I *beg* your pardon, sir."

Colonel Bowyer said something inarticulately over his unlit cigar between his teeth, and held out his fingers.

"Another, too, for me, Bird," said his friend. "What infernal things they make now."

"*You'll* know about these things in good time," said Colonel Bowyer, holding the light to his cigar, and still a little inarticulate—"eh, Pope?—when they make *you* up into fusees! How you'll blaze—light up the whole place! You'll be some good for once in your life! Come along, I say—another of these infernal fine days. Another week, I

suppose, will satisfy that doctor. Come, I say. If it occurs again, I know I'll cut—cut, sir.”

And the two gentlemen passed out. Neither Colonel Bowyer nor his friend Pope (the latter through a laudable spirit of imitation) cared (to use their favourite phrase) a short, sharp, and popular monosyllable—for most things in life. The first gentleman had seen a great deal of life—had sifted all its pleasures, and affected to be as sick of them as a child who has surfeited itself with sugar-plums. The habitual expression of his mouth was a steady sneer. He had found out that there was little in life worth talking about—or perhaps that common, vulgar people could talk a great deal—and therefore he said as little as he well could. His friend Pope was like a Chorus in a Greek drama, and commented for him on any plot that was going forward.

They walked on slowly down the Esplanade, enjoying their portly, full-flavoured cigars. The colonel might as well have been inhaling opium, for this was like any

other dangerous narcotic, and had helped, with strong drinks, late nights, and other diversions, to wear down the interior bolts and cogs of his human machinery. Colonel Bowyer's physician had sent him down here for the "sea," which the patient took with the same repugnance as he did the nasty drugs prescribed.

"None of the women out this morning," Mr. Pope said.

"Old Sandwich," said the other, languidly, "you see on the beach there—count her, I suppose?"

"And 'Little Bell,' d'ye see there, beside her?"

The soft watery eyes of the colonel were not as good for distant objects as they were for near; and he supplied this defect with a glass.

"Eh!—where?" he said; "Little Bell?"

"I can't make her out at all," said Mr. Pope.

"Waiting for her uncle, Bird told me, or her mother, I forget which."

"That of course; but, 'pon my soul, she puzzles me,—don't she you?"

"No," said the other, calmly; "no, she don't. Do you suppose I can be wearing my head, puzzling about creatures of that sort in a wretched hole of a place like this?"

"Well, *she* puzzles herself about you, my friend, *I* can see that. Didn't I see her at dinner, yesterday, when you were opposite; didn't I see on the beach when we passed by?"

"Oh, that sort of thing. Pope—come now," said the colonel. "I don't want these tricks down here; I know the class of thing perfectly, eh?—Half milliner's forewoman, half governess. And when it's not, they get up the look, you know—God knows why."

The two gentlemen were now approaching a green bench, where the lady of whom they were talking was seated beside another lady, who was far stouter and sat far higher,—whose face, too, was very full and brick-coloured, and who was not reading or working, but looking out anxiously from side to side. Her companion was that "Little Bell" to whom the gentlemen had been

alluding, with a free familiarity not justified by even acquaintance.

She had on a small, bright, low-crowned straw hat, such as we see in the elegant shepherdess pictures in France ; and to the hat was a little short black veil—alas ! only too necessary here, where so many men of forward manners were going about. She had to pull it down like a vizor very often.

The capital air and the bathing of this delicious place—not to mention the good diet and regular meals—kept this young girl in excellent health. Her cheeks were very fresh, and her neck, on which she wore a ribbon with a little gold cross—believed to have been her dear mother's gift—was not long or "stalky" (like Miss Virginia Galt's), but short and full and white, often tempting her, and very reasonably too, to imitate her favourite Anne Boleyn gesture—when she clasped it fondly—as who should say, "This little throat," &c. So with the rest of her figure, which was not stout, but still well-appointed throughout.

There were many single ladies at the

hotel who were there on their own unprotected responsibility ; so it did seem a little unfair that public curiosity should, as it were, challenge *her* right to be under the same conditions. But is there not a special class of physique and bearing, almost undefined, which draws down female odium—a taint, as it were, of those two callings which Colonel Bowyer had so happily said she suggested. And that gentleman had started a more curious speculation than he fancied, when he hinted at the mysterious attraction which the union of those two professions had for his sex.

There can be no question but that the ladies of the place all looked upon her with a strange and unreasonable suspicion, as though some unlawful little craft had come into those innocent waters to “cut out,” piratically, unwary vessels,—a calling the regular King’s Ships shrank from, and were too decent to take up.

This poor girl—whose only fault was her loneliness—who was daily expecting her aunt,—from Reigate, we believe she said,—a lady of great infirmities, but with

the best heart in the world, was the victim of this unkindness. Was she, it may be fairly asked, accountable for this isolation? On whose head is it to fall if Nature has not fitted us out with sisters and aunts—not to say husbands—or propriety companions of some sort? There were some charming girls in the house—sweet tempered, charitable in all the senses, and really good natured—yet *they* took this unkind view, and “drew off” from the lonely woman whose old aunt could not come. The men could be, and—to their praise be it said—were, more generous. Kindly and encouraging male eyes rested on the stranger; but she was shy, and tried hard every day to have her place among her own sex. The old gentlemen liked her very much, she was so respectful and so grateful to *them*. She liked listening to the amusing and instructive experience with which those who had seen the world were stored. The younger class she did not so much encourage. From Colonel Bowyer, who had allowed his soft but free eye to settle on her very often, she shrank away. Mr. Pope,

she allowed, was "good natured," but his friend was a "strange mysterious person, *with a history*, of whom," she confessed, "she stood in dreadful awe."

"Where had she come from?" was a question often asked — gentlemen raising their heads from newspapers to put it. "How long had she been there? To what Bells did she belong?" No one could reply satisfactorily to such questions — to which, indeed, those who put them had no title in the world to expect answers.

One dark night, when the omnibus which met the train had come up, and the hall was full of baggage and newly-arrived guests — all waiting at the little window where the young lady sat before the great book of the house, and distributed rooms under the direction of Mr. Bird, the manager—who had a secret and mysterious language between them, as to the allotment of the proper room for the proper guest—a modest and retiring party of three were kept to the last, and with difficulty obtained accommodation. It was a tall, timorous gentleman, with his wife, who were both in great confusion at the whole scene—from having been accustomed

all their lives to find a bed, and going to bed, a mere matter of routine, and not a thing to be doubtful—and with them, a little behind, a young lady in a hat.

Mr. Bird first noted their luggage—which was satisfactory as to weight and number of boxes. He then took a glance at them. They were also so far satisfactory. A father, mother, and possibly, daughter.

“What would you require?” he said.
“Two rooms, and a sitting-room?”

The daughter spoke for them—managed all their business.

“Yes,” she said, eagerly; “and a pretty bedroom looking out upon the sea, if you *can*, please.” The daughter wore a hat, and a veil half down, and was very fresh, and not the least tired with the journey.

The rooms were allotted. It was then asked would they have some refreshment; and the daughter of the shy gentleman said eagerly that they would, and had the waiter sent to her, and, in the presence of her parents, ordered a very piquant little supper; then at the proper time retired to her own room.

The next day, when making the regular official entries at full length in the great ledger, Mr. Bird was naturally a little surprised to discover that no such relation as he had supposed existed between the trio who had arrived. They proved to be Mr. and Mrs. William Johnson, from the south — while the young lady, whom he had supposed to be their daughter, was Miss Bell—of England generally. She might, however, be travelling with them as a friend. Still Mr. Bird—whose profession made him suspicious—was someway a little nettled at this mistake—as if it reflected on his own sagacity. For he often boasted that, when his table d'hôte was full, he could walk down the whole table and tell off the names without a mistake. And he specially prided himself on a sort of instinct which made him recognise the various classes of social life, and infallibly detect your true gentleman, or your true “bagman,” however skilfully disguised.

It was this feeling that made him speak a few moments to the shy Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, as they sat on a bench which was on the steps of the hotel. He hoped they liked their rooms, and that the young lady,

their relation, did so. The shy couple looked at each other, but gathering confidence, the wife said—"Oh, she is no relation. None in the world."

"Ah, a friend," said Mr. Bird, gaily—"daughter of a friend — travelling with you?"

"Dear, no!" said the lady. "We only met her yesterday. She got in at the Junction, and was very agreeable and civil."

"Yes," repeated Mr. William Johnson, enthusiastically; "very lively and entertaining."

This was the way, then, Jenny Bell entered on the scene—having dropped, as it were, from the clouds into the charming little settlement founded at Penwillion by the dissolute old nobleman. It was an irregular entry, certainly—for the hotel had a just and reasonable horror of all wandering single young women. It had already suffered from such guests. In fact, in the balance-sheets of the Company there was always "a margin" written off for such contingencies.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

THE PENWILLION MORNING.

WE may look at the hotel at two different stages of its hotel life. In the morning, about breakfast, when it is full of robust healthy existence, like a strong being that has just risen and had its bath, and is ready for the day. We shall see it again towards the evening, when it is a little languid and subdued.

First for the morning view. The sun is shining, and the French spires, and the gilt vanes and flowery railing which runs all along the edge of the roof like a lace trimming, are glittering in the light. "Middle-aged Jenkinson's" "frantic" chimneys (as it was said the famous Mr

R—sk—n had called them), and which were indeed more like gorgeous ninepins than chimneys, came in for their share of the blaze. Breakfast was done, and the daily exodus of departing travellers—who paid their bills and went forth at that hour—had taken place. Small tumbrils of baggage had been trundled away towards the railway, and the departing families who went their way ruefully—like an ejected tribe—cast back wistful glances at the bright and glistening sea, which seemed like a great bath of colour, thick with silver and cobalt mixed together. The ever-present manager had hovered round trunks and travellers like a spirit.

A little girl, four or five years old, in a straw hat and a very short little dress, was busy with Mr. Bird's lower limbs. Perhaps her affection was based upon biscuits or lumps of sugar, or cherries—delicacies with the control of which she had indistinct notions he was associated. He looked down on her a moment, but took no more notice. She was not a responsible guest. He was, besides, shifting his keys

upon a ring, as though he was working a portable abacus.

She was a very pretty little thing, with flaxen curls tumbling on her back, and she swung herself from his leg, looking up at his face as at the ceiling.

At that moment a lady came from the breakfast-room—a lady who had risen late and breakfasted late. She stepped softly and almost timorously — almost out of respect, it would seem, to the great black and white marble pavement, so much superior to what she was entitled to walk on. She was putting on her tiny little straw hat as she came down. It was what she had often pleasantly termed her “waggoner’s hat,” having no plume or gaudy ribbons, such as persons of a superior rank and beauty would be *entitled* to wear. It was of simple straw, but if taken “at the foot of the letter,” no more like “a waggoner’s hat” than a field-marshal’s.

When the hat was adjusted—and there was a little struggle with insubordinate back hair—she saw the cold and ruminating Mr. Bird for the first time, and the little girl at

his feet. The prettiness and originality of the picture struck her—struck her very naturally. “Charming!” she said, in quiet admiration. Then something in the affectionate attitude of the child suddenly striking her with a sort of surprise, she looked from it to Mr. Bird, and from Mr. Bird back to it, with a doubtful inquiry and a delight that was only waiting certainty to burst out.

“No? And you did not tell me this,” she said, with soft reproach. “When did it—the little darling come? It is charming!” and she actually went down on the cold black and white marble squares, and brought the “waggoner’s hat” on a level with the child’s face.

The manager looked down on both without any paternal pride apparent, and still busy with his keys and calculations.

“I beg pardon,” he said. “She came yesterday, I believe.”

“*Only* yesterday!” said she, starting back in surprise, and bringing herself into the attitude of a kneeling nymph. “No, impossible! And, oh! how like,” she con-

tinued; "I would have known her in a crowd, in the largest crowd. The same coloured hair—that is, I can see perfectly how hers will deepen into the same shade. And tell me," continued the lady, rising, for the stately marble flags were chilling to her knees, and she had only a muslin dress on, "is there any likeness—any marked likeness? Something tells me, no. I should say more like——"

Mr. Bird had now done his keys, and came out of his reverie.

"I cannot tell, indeed," he said, impatiently; "I have not time to study likenesses. She is a very well-behaved child; her mamma, Mrs. Colley, will tell you all these matters."

"Her mamma, Mrs. Colley!" said Jenny, not at all disturbed by this discovery; "oh, indeed! Ah, yes, to be sure! The lady with the white shawl. I thought so; how odd! A thousand thanks for setting me right. You have saved me," she added, with a little mysterious confidence, "from such a blunder! I could tell you a little history, Mr. Bird, about that—but—I won't now."

She saw Mr. Bird put his keys sharply in his pocket and turn to the glass case. "I wonder how you find time to think of *anything*, with such terrible cares on you. This vast place, oh! this E-normous establishment," added she, fixing her eyes with sympathy on a ventilator at the top of the lofty hall. "All on one brain! It is wonderful, astounding! And everything moves on so quietly, with such delightful smoothness, and I am sure *we are all not half grateful* enough to—our——" and she paused—"unseen benefactor."

The lady here dropped her eyes on a square of black marble, very reasonably awaiting an acknowledgment of these praises. He turned away impatiently.

"How long have you been here?" he said, abruptly.

"I suppose only a little week or two. But woman, you know, Mr. Bird, can live a whole year in a short day. You must make allowance. We have more feelings, and crowd more into a shorter space. We are thrown back upon ourselves. Ask Mrs. Bird. She will tell you the same."

He was growing more impatient and restless, and looked.

"About the room?" he said, sharply, "what is this about your room?"

"Oh, it was only I thought that as the house was *so* full, and there might be people—old friends, perhaps, whom you would like to oblige—I should not mind in the least changing. Oh! you could put me anywhere—*anywhere*, and I should not know it! Higher up, even. What I mean is, I should not like to—to put you out—that is——" and the lady again dropped her eyes to the favoured black slab.

"Do you want a lower-priced one?" said this blunt manager, on whom, indeed, it was a pity to waste such soft words.

"Oh no, no, no!" said she, in a sort of alarm; "not that, not for the world. Nothing could be more charming—more——"

"Oh, well, there is no reason why you should change, at least on *that* ground. The rooms on *that* flight are all the same, built on the same pattern. I must go now; you will excuse me, please."

"Ah, your valuable time, to be sure,

How unthinking I am ! Dinner, I suppose, at the same hour ?” And she glided out into the air, and took the way over the grass to the sea.

As soon as she was gone, the manager turned sharply to the glass bureau. “Miss Cope ! Send out Miss Cope !”

Miss Cope, the young lady whose daily duty was the erasing guests’ names and allotting numbers, came out of an inner parlour, ordered arms, as it were, before her colonel, and became framed in the window.

“How long has she been here ?” he said.

Miss Cope’s delicate fingers took a light canter down two or three of the ledgers, and drew up suddenly near the bottom, as at a trench.

“She came sir, on the second—about three weeks ago.”

“And has she paid regularly ?”

“No ; two pounds on account the first week, and a small balance carried over. She owes fifteen pounds. I was going to speak to you to-day, sir.”

“I see,” and Mr. Bird began to ruminate.

“We have sent it in regularly,” said the

young lady, "every week. She says her father or aunt is to be here every day."

"Oh, that of course," said Mr. Bird. "It was a mistake to let her in. It is very awkward. With a man it is plain enough. I must write to the secretary to-day about it. It won't do to have any noise. The Company don't like it. We should have been more cautious with any lady coming by herself."

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

THE BATHING.

WE may follow the course of this bright watering-place day yet a little more. Towards noon the Bathing set in. The strand, said the railway advertisements boastfully, in thick crimson letters, was "the smoothest in the empire;" and down towards the right, where there was a little creek, and where the Company had set up whole files of little houses upon wheels, which were so bright and clean and white they reflected back the sun, was a little scattered procession of ladies and children, with maids following behind, carrying bundles, marching to bathe. Stout mothers—as anxious as they were stout—

at the head of their little regiment; pale wives, and eager uncontrollable girls, who would presently play wild antics in the water.

Already was the frequent splash heard, and the cry of struggling infancy for the first time plunged by rude hands under the waves. Already were the fresh and boisterous girls, in insurmountable spirits, plunging and splashing, and performing their habitual gymnastics. And it was here that Miss Tosher—who rode unbroken horses—earned her well-deserved reputation, by some extraordinary feats of natation,—diving and remaining below for many moments, splashing, leaping even—her oilskin cap rising and falling on the surface of the waters, and she herself revelling in the strong “fresh” waves when the day was rough and the breeze stiff.

Mrs. Tollemache criticised her with disgust from a bench on the shore. “She swims *just* like a fish” (as if that were any disparagement!); “look how her shoulders go up and down like a horse in the water! She wants to show herself to the men.”

Over the strand, walking by herself, our Jenny Bell glided softly, making her way down to the beach. She, too, delighted in the fresh morning air, and it blew tenderly on her round cheeks. The good breezes of the place, and the famous bathing, in which she indulged regularly every morning, had had a wonderful effect upon her health. ("She does it to keep down her blood, my dear," said the polite Mrs. Tollemache.) Those cheeks had grown brilliant, her eyes yet brighter, and her face somewhat rounder, which made her a little uneasy.

Hence Miss Bell was seen to take long and severe walks—up hills for preference, where there were "lovely views;" for she had a "little solid sketch-book," not much bigger than an average-sized Prayer-book, and which she tied up a good deal with its green ribbons, like the strings of a bonnet. Gentlemen begged hard to see these little "rough sketches;" but Miss Bell, of a sudden overcome with timidity, would put them away with alarm. They were mere "rude" designs; she would be ashamed to let them

be seen a moment. They were mere notes and hints,—thoughts, as it were, of which she made a memorandum. In water-colours, indeed, she had had a good deal of training. She often told her friends how “Papa’s study,” at home, was all hung round with her little efforts. She revelled in them. When she got home after these sketchings, she said she set her little memoranda before her, and worked all these “thoughts” into a finished picture. It did indeed require a wonderful memory, and showed a marvellous skill and quickness,—for really these hints were sometimes no more than an irregular line or two, irresolute, and almost without meaning in the eyes of the unskilled.

On this morning she went along in great good humour. She had all her little properties, without which she never travelled. A little leathern casket, decorated with knobs of steel, and which seemed to be fitted generally like a little surgical instrument case, out of which protruded a strip of petticoat-edging, whose progress was at about the rate Gobelins tapestry is traditionally sup-

posed to advance; but it was an intricate pattern, and justified all the pains and nicety Jenny bestowed. With a Lilliputian pair of scissors she was long cutting out a hole, and still longer patting and smoothing the strip upon her knee, and looking at it, as it were, at a favourable focus, in every light, and with many positions of her round face. Still, its progress could never be satisfactorily marked. And thus the boldest conclusion that could be arrived at was, that there was *a* piece of this fancy-work always in hand.

And yet, looking at it in another view, it had an interest of its own. It was a wonderful little bit of chronology, and every stitch in it had marked time to innumerable little dramatic incidents, speeches, and effects, in a thousand-and-one *entretiens*. Where there was languor it had rallied; where there was confusion—into which Miss Bell's *naïveté* and impulsiveness led her over and over again—it covered her retreat. It served all the purposes of a lady's companion in the room when gentlemen were by, without the inconveniences of that sort of society.

Once our Jenny took up the embroidery of a handkerchief; but that sort of industry was found not to offer the superior advantages of the other. She was now almost at the beach, with a small straw-coloured parasol, no larger than a mushroom, spread to the sun. She was smiling to herself as she walked,—thinking, perhaps, of that Manager Bird.

It was not bathing-time as yet—possibly too soon for good health—especially after that little meal of browned cutlets, and browner potatoes done in slices, which she confessed to have enjoyed a little *that* morning. The enjoyment was, however, pretty constant every morning, though the confession was not made so steadily. She sighed again as she thought of them; a sort of earthly delight, which, as she said sometimes to gentlemen, “I am *not* ashamed to own I like, Mr. Baring,”—with a defiant toss of her head, as who should say, “I know I shall suffer by this sensual confession, but I don’t care.”

Towards one o’clock it would be time to bathe. Meanwhile, here was the gay sea-

beach, in shape like an amphitheatre — with camp-stools, and chairs, and benches, and sentry-boxes, travelling out to the surf. She passed small encampments of virtuous families—children busily scavenging in the sand, and carrying out contracts for tiny earthworks, and regulated by very ugly maternal control in an unbecoming hat. She passed ladies sitting in twos and threes—single ladies—who under their hats had moral placards, threatening “Take Notices”—warning off free trespassers. She passed young girls — sisters, sitting in pairs, of the pretty two-cherry-on-one-stalk pattern—over and over again. This was, indeed, running the gauntlet for this poor girl, and always her sorest trial—for every one of these beings, as she passed by, took up a stone and cast it after her. That is to say, flung a little malignant whisper in her direction. They all knew her—youngest and oldest—plainest and prettiest. They knew all about her, and felt a strange interest in knowing as much more about her as they could learn from their gentlemen friends. But their moral estimate of her was unfairly

low. From the glances, the meaning looks, the sniffs with which the air became charged as she passed by, their cruel and unreasonable prejudices would seem to have accepted her almost as a sort of water-colour reduced copy of the lady who drives ponies, and whose name is nameless.

But now, happily past these enemies, she was in a zone where she could draw her breath more freely. Here were the outlying pickets of the brave *men*—her true friends—the young, the old, the gallant, and the free and easy, perhaps, which, however, was but a small tribute of endurance for such generous countenance. Some knew her—some did not; but, even of the latter, there were kindly eyes of encouragement bent on her. She had a little seat which she had made her own, on a sort of debatable ground—strictly speaking, among the Malays—yet on the border; and here, sitting down, she had taken out her faithful strip of calico—guide, philosopher, and friend—which seemed to serve her instead of the confidant or protector which Nature had not yet suited her with. But this work is

not yet fitted for the open publicity of the great sea-shore. She was merged into other humdrum workers. Soon she had taken out the little solid sketch-book, and was apparently "getting in" an outward-bound vessel in the horizon.

Very soon a little sharp black man—very short, both in person and speech—came tripping up behind her, and dropped down—a sort of heap, as it were, of short lengths—beside her. She gave a start, but she had fortunately time to shut up her book.

"Won't you let me see? Do, now?" said he. "I know something about this sort of thing. I do, indeed."

"Not for the world," said Jenny, clasping her book behind her, as if it were her babe which the soldiers were going to tear from her. "Never, Mr. Pope. You mustn't ask me."

"And so you draw?" he said. "And you never told us. When I say us, I mean the colonel and I. Now, what is it—the hull there, or the sea, or that ship? Come now."

"What!" said she, amazed at these mysterious powers of divination. "Who told

you? Ah! you looked. But, even if you did, you *could* not have made it out. You see," continued Jenny, with comic confidence, "it is all done by signs and numbers, and a stroke or two."

"Isn't that the way most drawings are done—eh?" And Mr. Pope laughed humorously.

Jenny hung down her head, and she seemed then to be a poor weak girl, and not equal to the rude, strong, healthy jesting of men who mingle in and battle their way through the world. He saw this feeling in her face, and the man, who was so gifted, felt a twinge of compunction at putting forth his powers on so helpless and gentle a creature.

"Beg your pardon, Miss Bell. Tell me all about your plan. Do, please. Oblige me."

Jenny gave him a grateful look.

"I was once," she said, "at the top of Ben Tobin—one of the loveliest mountains in the world—looking down into the valley. *Such* a view!" she added, clasping her hands on a strip of petticoat-work she was now busy

with. "There were some gentlemen with us—two, I think—one of whom was a writer. Suddenly the guide called out to us to look. I turned and saw the sun in a cloud, just sinking behind a sort of crag overhead. Another second and I had been late. I shall never forget that cloud. No, no, never! But, would you believe it, *they* missed it—looked down the valley instead. Oh, I was *so* grieved!"

"What, the writing man—*he* didn't see it? Very good—very good indeed."

"How malicious!" said Jenny. "Well, I saw he took it to heart, so I took out my little book, and, with a pencil, took down 'the thought.' It was a mere memorandum."

"I don't follow you," said he, shaking his head. "I don't see it. You know I do figures myself, and the pay-sergeants bring me their books. We are all obliged to look over them and tot them up—we are indeed. I can tell you we have to lay our minds to it. Not every fellow can do it."

"I know it—I can believe it, indeed,"

said Jenny. "Well, the next day, he was saying he would give his eyes—the world—anything—to have that cloud."

"He—who?"

"Mr. Vanlew. He writes in 'Holborn Hill'—the magazine, you know. He wanted it for his new serial story."

"By Jove! and what for?"

"I went up-stairs, took out my little memorandum and my colour-book, and in a few minutes had it all ready. Oh, he was so grateful, so nice about it! I really felt quite ashamed."

"Oh!—ah! Of course," said Mr. Pope, turning over on his side and assuming the lazy *pose* of a tired dog upon a rug. "And now, do you like this place?" said he, suddenly, after a silence of a few moments.

"Oh yes!" she said. "I ought to. People are very kind to me."

"Of course," he said; "they always are at these places. And now, did you find them so at the last place—eh?—where you were before, you know?"

Jenny shook her head sadly.

"I have never been at any of these places before. I have been now, for the first time, thrown upon the world."

"Ah, you won't tell me, I see," said Mr. Pope; "too close. There's poor Bowyer dying to know about you—where you come from, and all that sort of thing. Tell me why don't you speak to him, and that sort of thing? I can assure you he——"

"Quite approves of me," said Jenny, "I dare say—I have no doubt; but I don't wish to know your friend; I have my reasons."

"And for God's sake why?" said Mr. Pope.

"People in my position," she went on, firmly, "cannot be too careful. There are some dreadful stories about your friend. He would be an unsuitable acquaintance for me. I feel a tremor as he passes me by. I must be careful; and I beg, Mr. Pope, you will never think of bringing me to know him, now that I make a point of it. And you will understand me speaking se-

riously and solemnly. As Mrs. Wright said yesterday, no virtuous woman could know Colonel Bowyer."

"What stuff!" said his friend, in warm protest. "Why, they all know him—would be at his feet, if he would let 'em. If you saw him with Lady Mantower—why, she absolutely pets him; and old Lady Woolwich and Mrs. Heligoland—why, they actually bid for him like auctioneers. Surely you don't mind these old-woman's stories—a girl like you, that has seen and been knocking about the world?"

Jenny slowly rose and gathered up her materials. She spoke a little sadly :

"I may have been knocking about, Mr. Pope, as you say, but I have had good and virtuous parents—if they have been taken from me it is not my fault—who early implanted good and virtuous instincts. If they did not leave me much more, they at least left me that inheritance. And no man shall take it from me," she added, looking steadily at Mr. Pope.

"Of course not," said the other, abashed. "But I tell you it is all lies. They are

never tired of slandering poor Bowyer from morning till night."

"Ah, that may be," said Jenny, going. "That is another view of the case. I would not judge any one too hastily, but one in my position cannot be too careful. Good-bye, Mr. Pope; I must go and bathe now." And she tripped away, followed by Mr. Pope's admiring eyes.

It has been mentioned that among the visitors was this Colonel Eldred Bowyer—a tall, slightly-stooped, "gentlemanly-looking man"—at least, he was often thus described by those who fancied that well-made clothes, an expression of habitual contempt and undisguised "sickness" of present society, were the sure marks and tokens of what was gentlemanly. He had a large high nose, cold grey eyes a little weak and blood-shot, and was not far off from forty-five; but though his skin was "gone," and perhaps his teeth, and perhaps, too, the sight of those grey weak eyes, he kept the banner of youth flying in the black glossy hair which covered his head and hung down over his eyes, and was shaken up again at

intervals. He was cousin to a nobleman who had no children, who was old, but who still might marry a housemaid or a barmaid, or even a penniless young girl of decent family, any day. But though he himself, to do him justice, had given up all hopes of his succession, and spoke with open disgust of it, he was still regarded with unabated interest. Round him floated a cloud of strange legends. Among the ladies especially he had a very mysterious fame, and it was said that his life had been spent in strange, wild paths, and that, as he looked back, he must have seen the void strewn with ruin and wrecked happiness, and the forms of hopeless maids. They looked at his worn, "used" face with an awe, and yet, at the same time, a curiosity. They whispered as he passed. Now, however, he was sick of all things—disgusted in mind, ill in body, and was sent by his doctors down to the sea to try and get spirit and strength for that stooping frame out of the strong, stimulating sea-breezes.

As he walked about on his friend Pope's arm, and scarcely gave himself the trouble

of using eyes or tongue, he had taken notice of Jenny. She was alone there, as his friend presently found out; but though he had seen many other women alone at places of that sort, she had not the insipid helplessness of such persons. She had a piquant independence which attracted. She never cringed up to people, or was conspicuously grateful for attention. She had a sort of "character" about her, and could "take care of herself."

This loneliness and "singleness" of hers, besides, appealed to what may be called that low, vulgar, coarse sense which seems to have a corner in the existence of most "men of the world"—namely, a tendency towards girls who sit at stalls or stand behind counters—who take umbrellas, or are conspicuously "in evidence" in some such public way. What the mysterious attraction is in such publicity or such loneliness, it would be hard to analyse.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

COLONEL BOWYER.

THIS Colonel Bowyer liked also her "style," for she appeared on the debatable ground between girlhood and womanhood. She had such aplomb and steadiness, and, as Mr. Pope said, "uncommon fine eyes and cheeks;" and, "let me tell you," added this critic, keeping what he approved of most for the last, "a devilish good bust, too." It was, in fact, Mr. Pope who had first drawn his friend's attention to Jenny's merits; and it was Mr. Pope's frequent recurrence to her charms that at last finally sent up Colonel Bowyer's glass to his eye as she passed.

"I never saw a girl eat the way she does,"

said his friend ; " the way she walks into her wine and her cutlets."

" Well," said the other, " and is not she right? The other is the women's infernal affectation ; they eat in their rooms, if they don't before us. They want to be interesting. I know their tricks, I should suppose, pretty well by this time."

" By Jove ! I should say so," his friend answered. " And the way she stands up to the other women, too ; they'd eat her, every one of 'em, and she knows it, too. She would square up to them if they dare so much as turn up their noses at her ; and she knows that I like to see such game. And even you, Bowyer, my friend, you daren't come within a mile of her. She's as sagacious as a dog,—Jenny,—and knows how unprofitable the famous Bowyer is."

The clever Pope had, indeed, described Jenny accurately. The colonel had made some little advances, which he had always found quite sufficient on these occasions, but found himself, not repulsed—which would have implied some notice—but ignored quietly. On the contrary, Mr. Pope found

it comparatively easy to make her acquaintance.

The strand—again to repeat the extravagant panegyric under the picture on the railway boards—was “unrivalled in Europe.” It was, in fact, a very smooth and agreeable shore, and did excellently for all bathing purposes. At the bathing-hour it was a gay and busy spectacle. At one portion a little pier had been constructed, with a little plank pathway, with a rail, which ran out well into the breakers of a rough day, and offered fine exercises for the more daring and dashing of the swimmers. At another part there was a level strand, and the white boxes on wheels travelled out like a whole range of Showman’s Vans.

Our Jenny’s exploits here were what attracted most admiration—it was the department she generally favoured, as being, perhaps, less costly than the other. And here her surprising performances “off the plank,”—especially on those rude angry days when the waves were large, and green, and fresh, excited great admiration. But it was only the admiration of respect; for even here, on that great element—so grand,

so universal, so pure—which in all its treatment of our race knows no distinction of faith, morals, or rank, and makes uncomfortable and drowns both king and peasant, St. James and St. Giles, East-end and West-end, —even here the terrible distinctions of caste were carried out ; and among those dripping, shivering figures she was still held to be a pariah. She offered many little kindnesses to beginners—sometimes putting out her hand, sometimes giving warning of an ugly wave, and sometimes giving a little lesson, as—“Throw yourself more back, my dear ! Keep your head a little higher !” all of which were kindly and eagerly accepted in the water. But there were stern mammas standing on the shore and on the plank, watching their daughters’ performances ; who, when they came to land, shot fierce glances at Jenny, and openly—and perhaps in her hearing—told them “they were not, on any account, to speak to strange *persons* in the sea.” Jenny would only smile as she tripped away to her box ; her heart might have been wrung inside, but no one could see any sign of vexation

outwardly. Perhaps she was getting, as she often said, "quite case-hardened," from repeated slights and persecution.

The way in which she came to excel so remarkably in this healthful exercise was simple enough. She had often remarked that tendency to "fulness," and even to "blood," that was in her system. Not that she at all objected, or any one else indeed, to that ripeness and agreeable embonpoint, which was attractive enough, but she trembled at "becoming like old Mrs. Sandwich," or even like that "fine woman," Mrs. Leander Parry, who strode along like a grenadier, but whose face, though but of "a woman in the prime of life," used to flush and swell so terribly about dessert time. Not even the admiration of colonels and generals—confirmed noisily by their favourite oaths—could atone for such a visitation. When in town, therefore, Jenny had waited on the well-known Doctor Redpath, in Clifford-street, who was much consulted by ladies. The fame and skill of this physician had such an effect on our Jenny, when she was face to face with him in his own parlour,

that her voice began to falter, and it was with difficulty that she got out her little story. The clever man—clever in other things besides his practice—almost read off her “little story ;” and, with all her reluctance, succeeded in extracting it from her bit by bit, and told her to come to him two or three times more before she left. It was he who prescribed bathing—constant bathing—with, strange to say, “a nutritious diet ;” and, with a generosity quite unusual with him, declined the “little fee” she tried to press into his hand.

Among those who were “learning to bathe,” was a little girl of about thirteen. Singularly pretty, full of spirits and mischief and freedom, and with a very ready tongue, she was quite at home with all the gentlemen, who could scarcely “hold their own” with her ; and her ready replies, new and fresh every day, were told by them one to the other amid great amusement. Her name was Mabel Plumtre ; and, “smart” as she was, she could still be very gentle and interesting when she wished. She was an only child, and her father and mother—the

former a sheep, the latter a dragon—were, in their own ways, devoted to her. Her mother was, besides, a fiery zealot, who carried about with her religion congealed into ice, which she took every opportunity of forcing in this uncomfortable shape on her neighbours. She had come to this “ungodly vineyard” for the sake of her little girl, who had been ordered to the sea; but at the same time she said that she could “find work to do.” And the work to do she began at once by getting the manager to have fixed up in the hall a little tray with papers and a seductive inscription: “PLEASE TAKE ONE!” And it must be said that Colonel Bowyer and the ungodly responded to this invitation with great good will, finding it very useful as they came of a morning and took out their cigar-cases.

Of Jenny, however, she had a special horror. She did not even take her in as one of the select brands which might be plucked from the burning. She even was heard to speak of her, following out the metaphor, as “an unclean fagot” that would one day “crackle.” Once she spoke

of her as a "woman of Moab," which was repeated to Jenny, who replied smartly, that "she at least did not wear such Moab caps" as Mrs. Plumtre did; which not very brilliant witticism was at once taken back to Mrs. Plumtre, and inflamed her more.

Jenny, however, true to her policy, had tried sincerely to gain her. She made indirect advances; and was often surprised by that lady in the hall actually "taking one," which, however, only produced a remark in reference to burial-places that are whitened. She, too, surprising the little girl alone, had sat down beside her, "lending her a book" with pictures, which gave great delight and so absorbed Miss Mabel, and made her utter so many smart and pretty things, that she did not become conscious of that "Hot Gospeller," her mamma. Tramping over the beach fiercely, she had seen her child at a distance, and was rushing to snatch her from this "awful contamination."

"I wish you *would* like me, pet," Jenny was saying, engagingly; "and I am sure you would if you could. Your dear mamma—they have told *her* something about me. Oh,

how I pray and wish I were as good as she is! Or that she would teach me."

The girl laughed.

"Teach you, Miss Bell," she said. "Catch her at that. I could make you laugh so, if I were to tell you what I heard her say to a lady yesterday."

"What, dear?" said Jenny, with inquietude. "So many things are reported of her, and she is so good and holy."

"She said, she wouldn't touch you with a pair of tongs! Such a funny idea, wasn't it? And——"

At this moment her wrist was grasped furiously by the "Gospeller" mamma.

"Come away, miss," she said, beginning to drag her up. "How dare you speak to people—to *persons* of that sort, that you know nothing of? Come, miss. *Never* let me find you again."

Jenny's smile of resignation was her only answer to this language. In a moment, Mrs. Plumtre came tramping back with a book in her hand, Jenny's "picture-book."

"This is yours, ma'am," she said. "I don't allow my child to be taking such

things from strangers. I am really astonished how *persons* can take advantage of a parent's absence to do such things." And with fire in her eyes, and her lip "trembling with Christian meekness and charity"—so Jenny described it afterwards—she tramped away. It was really frightful, the way this lady, who had such strong "lights," traduced Jenny, after this. Where she found the stories she circulated, whether she invented them, or they were merely the offspring of a morbid imagination, it would be hard to say. However, Mr. Colter, the *Nisi Prius* barrister, when talking the matter over in the smoking-room with other gentlemen, pronounced, with authority, that some of the stories amounted to defamation in the eye of the law, and that Jenny, if she chose, might have her action. This, however, all occurred before the opening of our story.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

AN EXPLOIT.

ON this morning Mr. Pope returned to his friend. "Come along," he said; "take a stroll up the hill—it will do you good; and, I say — Jenny's going to bathe." They met some other gentlemen who had a good deal of the morning's time upon their hands, by whom the proposal was hailed with acclamation.

Jenny was well known to all the gentlemen of the colony, who had a little interest in what some called her "movements," and others her "tricks." This party met one or two more lounging on the steps.

“Come and see the women bathe! Jenny’s going to splash!”

In justice to these persons it must be said that they scorned the low, “snobbish,” and ungentlemanly practice of annoying ladies by staring or intruding on them as they enjoyed this healthy practice. They would not have cruised off and on in a yacht, or caused an utter rout by paddling up suddenly in a light boat; but were delicate enough to carry out their amusement surreptitiously, and took the trouble of walking to the top of a high hill, whence they could use their opera-glasses in secret, and without “giving pain” to the ladies. Alas for such delicate consideration! This espionage of the gentlemen was well known at the bathing-place—was counted on—was perhaps hoped for; and with this view it was that mammas dressed Mary and Alice and Blanche in flannel as becoming in make and colour as sea-water would allow flannel to be, decorating the material—all but impracticable under such conditions—with bright ribbons and trimming, which had to be renewed every second day. The oilskin caps were hopeless

as regards æsthetic treatment, and therefore Mary and Blanche bathed like naiads and mermaids with their hair about their shoulders, and in the field of the strong glasses looked picturesque enough as they went through their movements.

“Don’t plunge and tumble in that vulgar, beastly way!” Lady Mantower often impressed upon her girls. “Float along softly, and try and do it gracefully. If a thing’s worth doing at all, it’s worth doing gracefully.” And thus there were two classes of sea-bathers—the “vulgar tomboys,” who splashed and dived and plunged headforemost from the machines, exhibiting a revolting strength and daring; and the timid, fashionably-dressed nymphs, who were timorous in the water.

Our Jenny—independent, and disdaining to follow the traditions of any school—went through her own evolutions with perfect unconcern, and with but one study—that of benefiting her health.

Well as Jenny comported herself in the waves, it was always a yet more effective sight to see her progress home—in the

quality of a sort of gentle pilgrim, in loose flowing robes, and wanting only a scallop shell upon her shoulder. She allowed her long hair to fall down like a cape or mantle to dry, and feeling that this unavoidable display—because she *could* not bring herself to wear that odious oilskin—entailed publicity and attracted more attention than she desired, she walked demurely, with a Beatrice air, as if she was going to meet a modern Dante. But her path lay again past the Malay women, and amid a shower of moral brickbats and old eggs.

This was a rough though sunny day, which, however, was Jenny's delight. She glided through the billows like a seal—not with coarse, violent plunges, but with an easy, oily motion, which was the envy of all her companions, and the admiration of the gentlemen in the boxes.

"Look at her now," said Colonel Bowyer, whose wonderful glasses, as large as a pair of speaking-trumpets, brought her within twenty feet of him,—“how she does it! A fine, knowing creature, full of game and pluck! Look at the lot of them—all flop

and flounder, flounder and flop!—such raw creatures—no better than animals. See how neatly she turns! There!—she's gone under altogether!"

"Let me have a peep," said his friend, taking the speaking-trumpets from him. "Jenny's a great one—she is indeed—worth the whole gang! Why don't you know her, Bowyer—regularly, you know? You're welcome to my interest, you know."

"Your interest!" said the other, contemptuously. "Why, I've only just to notice her—to say a word—and she'll be only too proud. How do you know I *don't* know her—eh?"

"Perhaps you do," said the other, humbly; "I am sure I can't tell. There's your glass, my dear fellow—uncommon good one it is. She's come out now, so the show is over."

The colonel took it back sulkily, and continued his observation. Suddenly he called out, "By Jove!" and got up to have a better view. "I think there's an accident, or something," he said; "some one plunging or drowning out there! There's some

girl striking up and down. 'Pon my soul, she's going! and not a soul of those stupid creatures able to do a hand's turn for her!"

The glass was passed round.

"Who on earth is she? There!" said Pope,—“there! She's down again—she's down! I don't see her——”

Again the glass was twitched from him.

“Yes,” said the colonel. “I don't see anything. By——” and he prolonged this “by” in the intensity of his admiration—“there! she's coming out of the box!”

“Who? The girl?”

“No—Jenny. And there—she's in!—with a splash like a salmon!”

It was indeed our Jenny, coming splendidly to rescue a fellow-creature. What had occurred was this. The sea was bluff and strong—yet not cold—but a healthy day, with the sun out. Jenny, it has been mentioned, revelled in such “seasonable weather.” Mrs. Plumtre's little daughter was bathing also—under her mamma's strict eye—and that gay, sprightly young creature

had been learning swimming, and was paddling about with great effect.

"You've been in long enough now, miss, dear," called out to her one of the mahogany amphibious beings who live up to their waists in the sea. But the girl only lifted herself in the water, and calling her "nasty old shark," began to swim out to a distant box, where she had seen a friend's face.

It was then that the accident, observed by Colonel Bowyer and his friends from the cliff, had taken place. The anxious mother's eyes were following her.

"She's going too far out. Tell her to come back!"

And at that moment they saw the lively little girl cast back to shore one strange, wistful look of agony, and then throw up her arms. Then came the struggling and splashing—and they saw the whole truth.

The "Gospeller" lady in a second forgot all her "hot" divinity, and that "working of Providence" by which she could calmly explain all other people's troubles, and ran wildly up and down the slippery plank.

"Save her!" she cried in an agony. "My

child is drowning! Look at her! Will no one stir? You—you—you—woman, there!" She was calling to the mahogany being, who was splashing the water helplessly, and had advanced up to her shoulder nearly, but had stopped there. "Will no one—oh—oh—anything—oh!"

At that the little girl, whose prattle had been so buoyant and so acceptable to "the gentlemen," gave that last spring in the water, and had sunk down with a little choking cry that travelled even to the shore.

Jenny—glowing with the heat of aqueous exercise, for she never stayed in long enough to "get a chill"—was drying her hair with great vigour, before a little cracked looking-glass hung up in the box. She heard this confusion, and the excited voice of the unhappy Mrs. Plumtre. She set it down to "indecent wrangling" with the bathing-women—which was not uncommon with the lady. But the last cry of the unhappy mother—when her child disappeared—was not to be mistaken. Jenny opened her door—her hair about her

shoulders, and her wet bathing-dress still on. The unhappy lady came rushing to her wildly. (She had been at the edge of the narrow plank, madly about to jump in.)

“Oh, save her!” she said. “*You* can swim. You are a woman. She is out there. She *was* there. Oh!” she added, with a groan.

Jenny’s answer was a look—almost half a smile. In a second she had gathered her dress about her—not ungracefully—and was running along the plank. At the end she stopped a second, called to the helpless bathing-woman for the direction, and in another second had gone down headforemost, and with the splash that had excited Colonel Bowyer’s admiration. For almost a minute she was invisible. She had dived, and was swimming under water. Many eyes looked out anxiously, and when she rose far out, and looked round about her *alone*, a wild wail—more than a groan—burst from those on the plank.

She was looking for the direction still, and the mahogany being, good for that at

least, pointing vehemently more to the side. Down went Jenny again. In a few seconds she was up—put her hair back—paddling with one hand—and supporting *something* with the other.

That was indeed a triumphant progress of hers to shore. Gallant Jenny! The “Hot Gospeller,” who had so wronged her, waiting with tearful eyes and clasped hands till she landed. Even then she was invaluable.

“Fetch Doctor Smith. He is on the beach, near the seats, reading his newspaper. I saw him there.”

They did not know how to treat that poor sprightly little thing—now a wet lifeless mass. It was Jenny—bustling about in her flannel dress, and her pretty feet quite visible—who had the hot bath prepared. It was Jenny who found brandy—no one ever knew how—and mixed it, and administered it. It was she who had the poor girl turned on her face—according to the Humane Society’s directions. So that when Dr. Smith arrived—found with his *Times* in the very place indicated—he pronounced that everything had been done that *ought* to

have been done. In a short time the little girl's chest began to heave, and, being a strong child, and full of animal life, she very soon "came round." When Jenny saw this she drew away softly, and shivering a little—shocked, too, at the indiscriminate crowd of *both* sexes which had gathered. She got to her box, saluted with looks of admiration for her heroism, and dressed there calmly.

"I shouldn't be surprised," she said to the woman, "if I got my death of cold by this." Then, when she was dressed, and with her hair down her back, she stole away quickly, but not unnoticed.

It was great news in such a place. Indeed in any place Jenny's heroism deserved praise.

She was talked of for the whole day and night. The men were enthusiastic, but the ladies were still implacable. Among each other it was said she did it to "show off." "Too glad of the opportunity, my dear." "She knew all the men were up on the cliffs." "I have seen her myself swim out twice as far—so, if she *hadn't* done it, she ought to

have been just taken up for manslaughter." This was certainly an odd view. But in the evening, when Mr. Plumtre himself sought her out, and took both her hands, and with a trembling voice, said—"They both owed to her the life of their child," Jenny was quite affected.

It was different when Mrs. Plumtre came down from her daughter's room, and offered *her* thanks. She was greatly indebted, she said, to Miss Bell, who *had been an instrument of Providence* in helping to save her daughter's life. She hoped Mr. Plumtre had said what they both felt. In other words, she conveyed to Jenny that she looked on her still as an "unclean branch," and that she accepted her reluctantly as the "chosen instrument" which had given her back her child. Jenny accepted this in the same spirit; the "Hot Gospeller," she saw, was implacable, and with a bow and a smile she passed on.

But her fame spread through the hotel. Every one looked at the modest heroine with a greater interest. A few days later, indeed, there was an account of it in the *Penwillion*

Gazette. But still it could not give her caste.

She went out as usual in the evening, just before dinner, to sit on a green bench and read her book. There many passed by and pointed her out ; and the colonel, who had been lounging unprofitably through the morning, and talking with a churlish admiration of her exploit, drew near and saw her. He hesitated a moment, and then came up and sat down at the end of the seat.

"'Pon my word, Miss Bell, I must tell you—though not exactly knowing you—how pleased I was at what you did,—I was, indeed."

Jenny looked up in surprise, and perhaps alarm.

"I say," he went on, "we ought to know each other—same house, and all that—so I thought it was better to break the ice myself, you see."

Jenny closed her book, putting the marker in leisurely.

"I think you have made a mistake," she said ; "you take me for some one else,

perhaps?" (She was unrivalled at a calm, cold look of ignorance and indifference combined.)

"Mistaken you," he answered, coolly; "no, I should say not; I have seen you too long. You stand out very conspicuously, I can tell you, Miss Bell, on the background here.—No, no."

"I repeat," said Jenny, in the same tone, "you must have made a mistake. Reflect; for no gentleman would come and sit down and talk to a lady unless he knew her. So, I repeat, it must be a mistake."

"Confound it!" said he, "what d'ye mean, Miss B. Surely at this place we all know each other; and you ought to make it a point of knowing everybody.—You can act very well, I see."

"Oh, then it's not a mistake," said she, rising; "it was I who fell into the mistake—I mistook you. Then I must go back to the hotel; or perhaps you will leave me in possession of my seat and retirement?"

"Oh, come," said he, "this is a very heroic tone. It's very absurd carrying this on

with me, you know, who know all about it; come now, Miss Bell, don't let us quarrel, let us understand each other."

"Sir!" said Jenny, with flashing eyes, and starting up again—"you forget yourself! How dare you speak to me in this way? I suppose you think, because I am in this house alone, and without friends apparently, you can address any language you please to me. That is a manly view to take.—Will you leave me, sir, now?"

"Confound it!" said he, in a rage, "what a way you speak. What have I done?"

"Everything that is ungenerous. Go, sir,—appeal to any one of those gentlemen over there, to whom, if I was to beckon, and tell the way you have behaved——No, go. I leave it to your own heart to say, on calm reflection, if you have offered an unkind, a gratuitous insult to a poor unprotected girl!"

She looked very handsome and excited in Colonel Bowyer's eyes as she walked away, leaving him "quite turned over," as he said himself.

"'Pon my word," he went on, telling the

matter to his friend, "the way she stood up to me and railed at me soundly,—'pon my soul, for a moment I felt as if I *had* done something! She's awfully clever, Pope, and I admire her,—I do. And I tell you what, I must do the penitence, and you must introduce me in the regular way, as the girl will have it."

Which was later done as he had ordered.

That evening, about the dinner-hour, we may look down the table in the great dining-room of the Penwillion hotel—just like a long lane—almost looking like an open tent glazed with plate-glass, and what seemed a bank of rich blue sea all about them. The tables were in two long lines, joined by a horse-shoe; and every portion of it was lined with guests—like files of soldiers—all very hard at work, bowing and drooping their heads incessantly, as though they were paying courtesies to their friends opposite. There was a clatter of the small-arms of eating, as though a ceaseless fixing of bayonets was going on down the lines. Waiters were flying to and fro, and Bird—slow-moving, almost sad and solemn,

gliding here and there—had his eye on everybody and everything. There were red faces, pale faces, sickly and healthy faces, smiling and glum, sad and joyful, beautiful and ugly, old and young—all distributed with a sort of impartiality down the sides. There was a sort of law that seems to govern the allotment; for generally a round rubicund and jolly face was a sun about which were grouped a pale and thin face in a frame of grey hair, two pale young female faces, and a fourth face with a glass in its eye, which was the representative family group.

There was a gap or two, high up at the honourable part of the table, not very far away from where Lord Alfred Jason sat with his lady. And to this quarter the soup came, presently flying back, under the direction of Bird. For here is a band of ladies who have been a little late, walking up the room, with quite a queue of light waiters fluttering behind them. The lady who is Captain, and walks in front, was tall, heavy, and stout—"large," the ladies described her—was roughly dressed in a suit of black, and wore a very common cap.

She had great thick lips, and false locks of rude workmanship. She was followed by a train of fair-haired, rigid-looking daughters—very thin and pinched girls—whose skin seemed spread with the tightness of a drum over their faces. Their mother often indeed bade them get rid of that “scalded” look, as she called it. “Mrs. Tollemache late as usual,” ladies said to each other, with a smile. “Catch Biddy Roberts in time!” an old gentleman remarked to his companion—the words coming through the fibres of a toothsome chicken-bone, which his false teeth had crunched.

“Biddy Roberts” had been the maiden name of Mrs. Tollemache, by which she had been known years ago to many gentlemen—that is, before she had married young Tollemache, a youthful fool, belonging to a good “high” family, and whom the high family said she had “trapped shamefully.” At this hotel she tried hard to be the queen of the place, to rule and lay down laws, and “give a tone” to it; and she had been so far tolerably successful, in spite of a rough sergeant’s manner, and a coarse bluntness,

which was in reality vulgarity. ("Biddy Roberts" had been a surgical instrument maker's daughter.) "I say everything that comes into my head, my dear," she often told her company from her arm-chair.

Lord Alfred Jason, a gentle nobleman, mortally in dread of her, and to whom she made rude advances, stooped forward and bowed to her over his plate.

"That's Lord Alfred, my dear," she said to her daughter, as she "bundled down" her napkin on her lap as though she was putting a towel about her knees, "bowin', isn't it? A little late, Lord Alfred. I'll overtake you, though. What's this soup, my dear? Same as yesterday? They mess their soup all up. Yesterday it was beastly; but their ongtrays are beautiful, my dear. Who's that at the back of Lord Alfred?"

(Mrs. Tollemache was accustomed thus to speak, passing from loud and open interrogation to a kind of *demi-voix*, rising from that again to public exhortation, the whole having the effect of the droning of that instrument so common in French churches, and called the *faux bourdon*.)

But now the sound of wheels was heard—(it was an interval of rest when the roast and boiled was being looked for)—and many vacant faces, looking up, saw passing the windows one of the phaetons of the country, with luggage behind, and travellers inside.

Tourists, no doubt, who had been about the country, and who were now coming to the hotel. A gentleman cutting slices off his bread, in the absence of other victuals, says, with a little pride, that there are more people for the hotel, that it is already “full as an egg,” and vows to Heaven that he can’t conceive where Bird will contrive to put ’em. The manager himself has glided out, and in ten minutes public curiosity is gratified by the entrance of the party.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

THE LEPELLS.

THEY were of a different order from the hungry and almost sensual beings who were so hard at work about them. They came in a little embarrassed, yet with dignity, with Mr. Bird the manager on before them like a herald, and a flock of waiters following behind. They were a contrast, and a remarkable one, to the gaudy ribbons, the vulgar stripes, the green silks, that seemed to flutter all about them. For they were in very deep mourning. There were places somewhere, as Bird well knew; but disorderly guests and lawless ladies had moved up, and drawn chairs round them, to have

more room, and thus the party in mourning had to walk round the place, and bear a thorough scrutiny.

Mrs. Tollemache had her glass up in a moment. She saw that it was a gentleman and two girls. "A distinguished lookin' man enough, m' dear," she said; "I know good people; but the girls seem small beer enough." And, in truth, the gentleman did excite much interest. For he was tall though a little stooped, had a bright eye that moved restlessly, and an iron-grey moustache and beard; not wild and bushy, but small, wiry, and symmetrically shaped. But whether it came from his deep black dress, or was the natural cast of his mind, there was a deep air of dejection on him, as though he had done with the world, and had some incurable grief.

"A widoor, I'll bet," Mrs. Tollemache said, quite aloud, and addressing a sauce she was mixing on her plate with a bit of bread. "He has all the cut of one."

The two girls had some of the sadness of their father. One was very *petite*, with a small head and prettily made figure; hair

that lay close, and was not thick or "matted," but fell into a pretty waving outline; and a little face that had naturally a tranquil, demure expression, and when more pensive than usual, fell into an air of devotion worthy of Fra Angelico. ("I love to look at that face," said a gentleman who knew artists, and had a facility of illustration. "Ain't it one you'd like to take between your two hands, and put the hair back and look down into, like the feller in the picture?")

She had a tiny waist, which, however, was in proportion to the figure, and owed nothing to mechanical powers. As she was led round the room there was no confusion or embarrassment, and she followed her father demurely and pensively. Her sister was a little taller—was younger, and more brilliant. She had not the devotional air of the other, but a tranquil manner of her own. Afterwards it became known that the first was called Lucy, and the second Helen.

Behind them came in—and in strange confusion and embarrassment at all the eyes

which he fancied were turned from plates and wholesome victuals to gaze at *him*—a young man, who was more a lad than a young man, with a great deal of thick brown hair, and a fresh glowing skin, and a neck like a girl's—who walked along blushing while a place was being found for him.

“Look at that m' dear,” Mrs. Tollemache said. “Who's that boy?—he's very like Tommy Whiston's eldest. And now, these black girls—just what are they at? Can't they get a place and sit down quietly? showing off their backs round the room in that way! I suppose they want to *advertise* themselves to the place. But he's a fine man, m' dear.”

At last places had been found for them. Mr. Bird had detected the chairs hidden so skilfully by ladies' dresses, and moved them off. They were seated close to Miss Bell—a little way down on the opposite side of the table—and the healthy, blushing boy was plunged a little awkwardly into a vacancy made actually next Jenny herself, who liked plenty of room for her arms, and

who had privately got a waiter to take away the chair.

This entry had produced an impression, and invited speculation and interest. Miss Bell, who often said she was in delicate health—"Though you might say, to look at me, I was very robust, yet if you only heard what Doctor Redpath said to me when I went to him!"—and was obliged to eat heartily from medical advice. The same authority had ordered that little "pint of light Burgundy;" and after dinner, without medical instruction, as she herself owned, she took a little tiny glass of curaçoa to give "a tone" to her system—a waiter, who was in her particular service, as it were, bringing this stimulant to her every day, with great formality, upon a salver. Mrs. Tollemache, who saw this from afar off with disgust, used to snort out—"Delicate! She delicate! Pooh! she's *as strong as a horse*."

With children, and, indeed, the young generally, our Jenny was known to have a charming manner. She was said to put them at their ease at once; and this poor strange boy, whose face was glowing over his plate, as he felt that she was looking at

him, who was there cast down in an unknown land, deserved some encouragement to put him at his ease. Jenny drew her dress away.

"I am afraid I crush you horridly," she said, good naturedly; "they are so pressed for room here, and put us so close! They can't help it, however, for *this* is the season!"

"Yes—ah! Oh, I see!" the boy said, confused by being addressed. Jenny, however, went on.

"And you have come far to-day, I suppose," Jenny said, kindly. "Been travelling? Going up those steep mountains? I am told they are more difficult to climb than the Swiss ones. Now, did *you* find that? You are going to order wine? May I help you—as an old inhabitant, you know? They complain of it a good deal. *This*," she added, confidentially, and touching her little pint—"this is the best they have. Colonel Boldero is taking away some dozen with him."

With this encouragement the young man began to talk—and with that freedom and

honest candour which is so delightful in children of his age, he very soon fell into that spontaneous gush of personal detail which requires a listener, and only a listener. Jenny was delighted with him, and let him chatter on.

He was, indeed, an "ingenious young gentleman," who had only just begun to walk the highway of life alone. His face seemed to glow with an eternal blush, and he was very shy. But he was delighted with this new world, and the delicious landscapes to be seen over the hedges of the high road of society, and very grateful to everybody who was good to him. This was a special feature in Jenny's character, and people often remarked her kind encouragement to persons of this sort. She had in a few minutes taken him by the hand, morally. He told her everything about himself. He was not eighteen—his name was Swinton—his mother was alive—and he had just got his commission in one of the regiments of Guards. Wonderfully encouraged, the youth went on. He told

her a thousand little peculiarities—all personal—and how he was to enjoy himself—and how large was to be his allowance—how he disliked old Jowler, the general (D. A. G. at the Horse Guards)—a Cerberus in a red coat; but, on the contrary, he liked “Old Archer” prodigiously. “*He* never blew me up in his life. If I wanted anything, I had only to go to him. And I declare to you, Miss ——” and the youth stopped, blazing and flaming, and in dire confusion.

“Bell — Bell,” said she, softly, and smiling. “Jane Bell—or Jenny, as intimates call me. A dreadful name! I am afraid even you had forgotten it, though you heard it only ten minutes ago.”

“Why,” he went on, starting, “not the lady who saved the little girl this morning?”

“Oh,” said Jenny, calmly, “we make a great fuss about a little thing here. A dear little girl, and it would have been a sad pity.”

“Oh,” said he, with an unrestrained ad-

miration, "and so it was you. They told me everything about it at the railway station."

Jenny blushed.

"Do they talk of my foolish doings there?" she asked.

"Foolish!" he said. "Oh, how *can* you? I would give the world to have done it—to be able to lay my head on my pillow to-night, and think I had saved a fellow-creature. Oh, it must be glorious—though, indeed, in a man, it is almost a matter of course. They *ought* to do these things, and no credit to them."

"I did not know the danger," said Jenny, eating very softly. "That made all the difference."

"Ah, but you did," he went on, enthusiastically, "for all the others did, and wouldn't do anything. I declare it was splendid—magnificent—and though I only know you a little, Miss Bell—I may say for the last few minutes" (he indeed could not say any more)—"I cannot restrain myself from telling you how much and sincerely I admire what you have done. I can't find

words to say how I admire your gallantry—and done, they tell me, in such a dashing way. And you never told me yourself,” added the boy, eagerly.

“Never mind,” said she, kindly. “Is it worth recollecting? You who are going to be a man of the world, and fight the battle of life, will have plenty of better names to be charging your memory with. Talking of the battle of life, you would like to know something of the people here,”—and she good naturedly gave him a good deal of useful information, putting, as it were, the *carte de pays* into his young hand. “But you will find these things out for yourself much quicker than I can tell them to you. *You* should instruct *me*. Men read faces much better than we women. Tell me, now, who—we must be very secret and mysterious”—and she dropped her voice,—“or they may hear, *and you must not laugh*, or make *me* laugh. But who are the people down there, opposite? Did they come with you?”

Here was a mine of information! The youth was eager, and could hardly contain

himself. "I know *all* about them," he said. "I travelled the whole day yesterday with them—nice sort of people, but so shy, you know." This youthful man of the world was already remarking the shyness of his neighbours a little out of the world. "We came down together in the train," he said. "They got in somewhere about Crewe, you know; and they were so civil to me. I always make it a point to become friends with people on a railway. You don't know how they may turn out, or what friends you may pick up—so my mother, Lady Harriet, says." And the youth from whom these words escaped, hung down his head and coloured furiously, naturally fearful that Miss Bell would despise him for his reference to so homely a relation. But she was not of the scoffing world.

"So you *have* a mother?" she said, with almost mournful interest, her eyes fixed sadly on his face. "And you can sit with her, talk with her, and, O, *work* for her. *Mine!*"—and Jenny's head shook slowly as she thought of the good and dear parent who

had brought her into the world, and brought her up too. "It was the greatest blow I ever had in life," she went on, in a low voice. "A lovely summer evening, and we all thought she was only asleep. It was the calmest, sweetest, softest departure——" And here she had to lay down her knife and fork, and do what she could with her handkerchief.

The boy was confused and full of a deep sympathy. "Don't," he said; "I am so sorry—indeed I am. I can feel for you."

At a public table, with curious eyes all round her, this would not do; so in a moment Jenny had thrust down her grief, as it were—fastened it securely into that dismal closet where she kept the piteous memory of her lost parent, and had forced a smile. No doubt she was annoyed to see that the "iron-grey" gentleman opposite, and his daughters, had their eyes fixed on her, and, as well as she could make out, with the deepest sympathy. "Well," she said, hastily, "go on—do—it amuses me—it distracts me, even. Tell me all about

your travelling companions, and your adventures with them."

"Well," he said, confidentially, "I very soon worked it all out. The name was Lepell. How did I make that out do you suppose? One of the girls had a dressing-bag with 'L. L.' on it. *There* was a clue, you see. No one else would have thought of that. Then *he* had a newspaper which had come to him by post, and I made out the direction—don't you see?"

"I am afraid," said Jenny, smiling, "that you are dreadfully sharp—clever."

"Not at all," said the boy; "it's all observation—keeping one's eyes open. That eldest girl is engaged—engaged to a great travelling fellow—the Niger, you know; has lots of skins—tigers'; guns, and that kind of thing. He is coming home from Rome."

"Oh," said Jenny, looking at the girl, "how nice—how glad they will be to see him!"

"I suppose so," said the boy. "They are to go on to Spabad and meet him there. I dare say I shall go on too. But you never

saw such a man as the father; a widower—lost his son—his *only* son—never recovered it—dotes on 'em—worships 'em. I never saw anything like it *in all my life!*"

Miss Bell's eyes settled on the gentleman opposite—she had given a little start at the word "widower"—with a sympathising interest. Those eyes saw with admiration that fine classic head and face, and the deep iron-grey hair toned into such a mellow grey, and the eyes so soft and yet so bright, which looked now and again from one to the other of the daughters between whom he sat. That glance was running over with fondness. "I am sure," Jenny almost heard him say, "we shall enjoy ourselves here, dears; but mind, we strike our tents the moment you get tired. I wonder is this the *best* hotel here? Did they give you good rooms, dears? We must get the manager over to us. I wonder what's his name—these men like to be spoken to by their names. Do you know, Mr. Swinton?" he said to the boy, a little shyly.

Jenny looked up hastily, and had a capital "B" on her lips, but recollected Modesty, and dropped her eyes on her plate in confusion. The boy did not know, but she whispered to him, "Tell your friends that his name is Bird—Mr. Bird—the manager, that is."

"Ah, to be sure," said the boy. "This lady tells me it is Bird—Mr. Bird."

The iron-grey head inclined with an old-fashioned courtesy to the lady. "And I suppose," said Mr. Lepell to the youth, "a smart sort of fellow in his way?"

Young Swinton looked to Jenny as to the source of original information, and Jenny, shyly, with her face *turned half to him, half to the opposite side of the table*, said, softly, "He is very active and obliging, and they all like him very much."

(In this way do we glide into table d'hôte acquaintance.)

"Indeed," said the gentleman, in his natural sad tones ("quarter-point," as seamen would say, to young Swinton, three-quarters to Jenny), "it is always pleasant to hear that. I say, dears, we ought to have

better stuff than this to drink. What do you say to a little sparkling wine—first day, you know, and for the good of the house? You know they expect it here. Waiter!”

Waiter came, and there was presently a flask lying helplessly in a silver pail before them. He filled to the right and to the left. “Mr. Swinton,” he said, “you will join us?” When he had filled for Mr. Swinton he looked irresolutely at Jenny. “I don’t know,” he said, “but if this lady would so far honour us, and let us offer her——”

She flashed one of her sweetest, kindest smiles at him. She shook her head, and declined mournfully but graciously. Someway it seemed to young Swinton as if her refusal might have been indistinctly associated with the demise of her mother; and yet Jenny, in her heart of hearts, literally *doted* on champagne. Perhaps she thought that from *a mere stranger*, you know——

However, now they were on intimate terms, she very soon drew them to her. They were a charming little party of four. Curious to say, they were exactly the sort

of family she had long been turning to and seeking—she liked and looked for simple, good-natured people, not worldlings, of whom she was by this time sick. And, to say the truth, she delighted them. She told them of all the hotel doings—of the *vie intime* of the place—sketched airily and pleasantly, and not ill naturedly by any means, and amused these simple kind people immensely. Then she talked of herself,—how she was expecting a relation, her aunt, every week, whom she was *longing* for. “She is the only friend I have left *now*,” she said, “since—since—my poor mother went. We can only have *one* mother, you know!” and she gave a false smile, to hide perhaps the sudden pang at her heart.

The two girls opposite dropped their eyes, and Mr. Lepell hung his head, very sadly. They knew the truth of what Jenny had, as regards them, so unconsciously uttered. She had struck the common chord of bereavement; and the two girls and their father felt themselves looking kindly at the poor girl who had suffered as they had done.

She hastily changed the topic. She turned it to the manager of the hotel.

"He is an excellent man, I believe," said Jenny; "but without much sympathy or heart, you know. This hotel is his heart, and I believe he sacrifices everything to that! If we have a little," added Jenny, smiling, "so much the better. We ordinary people—you and I and Mr. Swinton—have no chance, I fear."

"I see," said Mr. Lepell—"I follow. I am sorry to hear this."

Mrs. Tollemache and others, long after, said, a little maliciously, that Jenny Bell had an object in speaking in this way of Mr. Bird; which was, to keep guests that *she* knew from talking to him. It is certain that she did so a little often.

"Not that it is against him," she said, "by any means; he only consults his employers' interest. We all should do that. But I think he pushes matters a little too far. As when that poor lady, whose husband died at sea, and left her nothing, and who, *they said*, was turned out at ten o'clock. If it was true, it was dreadful!"

“Cruel,” said Mr. Lepell, indignantly—
“incredible !”

It was perfectly true, though. The lady’s husband had died at sea, and after a delay of a week or two—when she had told Mr. Bird, candidly, that she had no money, and knew not where to look for it—he had quietly gone to her at night and required her instant departure, without scandal or tumult, in the name of the Company, but forgiving the arrears due. Miss Bell merely told it as a bit of the news of the place.

CHAPTER THE NINTH.

JENNY'S ENEMY.

AFTER dinner, when the lamps were lighted, the company gathered together in the Grand Drawing-room; for all things were grand in this hotel. There, by the liberality of the directors, everything was provided for the public entertainment—card-tables, chess, and the like; and a piano of goodly size and tone. There was always plenty of unselfish girls ready to entertain the company with cheerful minstrelsy: and others, who had executive skill upon the instrument, though at first slow to exhibit their power, came at last to be eager to take their turn.

“If we did not help one another, and do these other little kindly offices,” said Lord Loveland, in his professional manner, “if you do not do for me, and I for you, all in our turn, what a life it would be! Now it is nice, very nice, to see this!”

So it was—very nice; and almost nicer—and even Mr. Fireirons saw no harm in this amusement of the light-hearted of both sexes, mind you, in this innocent way—when some of the youths “got up” a dance. While they danced, the elders camped round card-tables, and played with the sternness and purpose the game of whist requires; with, too, the usual inconsistency of human character,—as, when a youth was forced in to make a fourth protesting that he knew nothing but the spots on the cards, and was told that it was no matter, and that he would do very well; and who, when he began to blunder, was scowled on, and treated with indignities.

Young Swinton very soon came over to Jenny. He was a little proud of knowing such a woman. She introduced him to Mrs. Sandwich. Mr. Lepell sat, with his

two daughters, looking on, and much pleased with the sight. A good-natured elderly gentlemanly gentleman, who had missed his whist party, was beside him—Mr. Boxer.

“I have been here regularly every year since the opening,” said Mr. Boxer. “Bird gives me the same room always—at the corner, looking out on the sea—you couldn’t come to a better place, sir.”

Then they talked of the people and the Company.

“Now,” said Mr. Lepell, with his curious-sad manner, confidentially, “could you tell *me*—you, sir, seem to know everything here—who is that young person over there, talking to the young man; she sat near us at dinner, and interests us a good deal.”

“Oh—ah—yes!” said Mr. Boxer. “I know her—Miss Bell; some weeks here—rather nice—I like her myself; but there has been, you understand, a sort of a set against her *from* the women, you know.” (Mr. Boxer was on the Stock Exchange; and only two nights since, Jenny, who had had the greatest interest in the *mechanism* of such

subjects as banking, parliament, and the like, had listened to him for two hours while he explained the laws which guided the rise and fall of stocks, &c.) "I don't see it," said he, "and think it a shame. Poor girl! what has she done? She is alone, is that her fault? There are many others alone—look at Miss Salt over there; but she has money."

"She told us that she had lost her dear mother," said Mr. Lepell, with great sympathy; "and seemed not to have got over it yet."

"Exactly," said the other; "most unreasonable; but *my* girls will stand off from her; and Mrs. B. really 'cuts up' in—er—quite a disagreeable way when I press the matter. But it *is* unfair; you and I know it is."

"Very unfair," said Mr. Lepell; "at least, I mean, I am sure your ladies have good reason to guide them in what they do. But I have seen many instances of the same thing; and I cannot but think it is the duty of honest men to show a little courage, and stand by those whom the cruel prejudices of

society oppress. I declare, I was quite touched to-day when I heard her."

"Again—between ourselves," said Mr. Boxer, dropping his voice, "I suspect Bird has been put against her. Bird is a reasonable man enough, but he listens to the women here too much. Hush! That's Miss Tollemache going to sing."

It was, indeed, that good-natured young lady, whom her mamma had sent to the piano, where she sat correct and a little stiff, with eyes on the place where the maker's name is usually emblazoned, about to give out Mrs. Wellington Sloper's (formerly Miss Graves, author of "Give us Hope," and other lovely religious drawing-room ballads) popular song, "They bid me change my mournful hue,"—a favourite with the house, and often called for. Miss Tollemache threw feeling and even passion into the burden. Another Miss Tollemache then succeeded her sister. And Mrs. Tollemache sat in a coterie, and gave a little kingdom laws, and listened, and took care that others listened too.

By-and-by she rang for Mr. Bird, with

whom she had many private interviews in the day. But she liked giving him audience in this way, *coram publico*. It became thus grander. She wanted a carriage for to-morrow. They were to drive to see some ruins, and young Mountargis, Mr. Bidder, and some other gentlemen of their suite, were to be of the party. She put a hundred questions to Mr. Bird, lolling back upon her sofa. Was the road safe, &c.

“Now, Bird, get me a footstool, that’s a good creature—all the vulgar women about here run for them, like children at a school, and there’s no rooting one from under them. I dare say that Bell woman has them all under her feet.”

The “Bell woman” was our acquaintance Jenny, to whom Mrs. Tollemache had taken a singular dislike, for reasons to be given presently.

While she was giving these commands—so stout and embedded in her portly arm-chair, that she and it seemed to make together a new sort of furniture—Mr. Le-pell and his friend were still exchanging notes.

"Look! that's Bird," said Mr. Boxer; "he is always at Mrs. Tollemache's feet. I am afraid he's getting to be a little of a toady."

Mr. Bird was gliding about at the back, looking under chairs and sofas for the footstool for her on the way. Mr. Boxer went on:

"Miss Bell tells a story about Bird and his turning out some poor woman who owed a week's money. I don't believe these things generally; but Miss Bell tells it well. For *she* says that Bird——Hallo! where do you come from? You gave me quite a start."

It was Mr. Bird's head that appeared a little suddenly at his feet.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said; "we are looking for a footstool for Mrs. Tollemache. I see one. We must get down half a dozen to-morrow. Beg pardon, indeed, sir."

"Just stopped in time," said Mr. Boxer, with a smile. "He could not have heard a word."

Mr. Bird was always so absorbed in his hotel, that it was not likely he would have

heard. And he had presently laid the recovered footstool at the feet of Mrs. Tolle-mache.

"I don't like a bone in her skin," said she, in continuation—she always expressed herself with a racy and nervous force—"not a bone in her skin. I always tell that Bird he is damaging the place by letting such in, and declare I won't come back here again, if there isn't some change made. I have daughters, colonel, and I have duties to my daughters, and I don't want them to be pushing past creatures that may have been picked up out of the street, for all I know."

All this was expressed in the loud coarse tone of a proclamation. Colonel Bowyer laughed.

"Why," said he, "if we go to that, we'd half empty the room. I dare say she is not so bad, if we knew her well."

"Knew her well," said she, with contempt. "I don't want to know her well. Julia, who's that at the piano now? One of those thumping women?"

Yet only a couple of weeks ago she had

known Jenny, and spoken to her graciously, and thought her rather a proper young person that knew her place. Julia was rather a helpless creature, with no social genius, requiring crutches, so to speak, in her career; and when, with infinite trouble, her mamma had dragged her to Sir John Slader, and actually "lashed" that desirable baronet "alongside," Julia could not board or carry on the battle by herself; for the foolish man had actually got loose and drifted away up beside another craft, the name of which was the Charming Jenny. This was but for three days, and in justice it must be said that the Charming Jenny did all she could to keep him away. In a few days he was called off suddenly; but Jenny had committed the unpardonable sin.

Hence Mrs. Tollemache was frightfully virulent in her language on the first shock; her words were actually slanderous in law. She hinted at dreadful things as regards Jenny's past life. There are places where you touch parents, as it were, on the raw, and change them into tigers. "She should be turned out into the streets, where she

came from!" said this violent lady. "What business has *she* here? She will corrupt the children! I wonder how any decent people can be *seen* speaking to her!"

And from this day out Jenny was called by her "that woman Bell."

The poor victim did all she could to appease the storm—did all she could with soft appealing eye and piteous look; indeed, had the Dowager required such humiliation, and there were no company by, Jenny would have gone down on her knees, and, in the Eastern fashion, laid the Dowager's sole on her head. But that lady would not answer her. To her friends she conveyed even coarsely the reason of her resentment. "That buccaneering woman! I'll *hunt* her out of the place!"

This, then, was the origin of the Tolle-mache hostility. But Jenny had not a mean spirit. When she saw that even lifting the royal hoof and laying it on her head would do her no good, she fell back on that "proper pride" which is above the mere accidents of station. As her enemy chose to be openly hostile, and exhibit such low ma-

lignity, she had spirit enough to meet her on the same terms. She disdained to "curry favour" with her, whom indeed she despised, and whose noble vulgarity no one better appreciated than Jenny. "My father was a gentleman," said she to the friend or two who repeated to her Mrs. Tollemache's unkind speeches; "he had every man's good word. He is gone now, and I have no one to stand by me! My mother was a lady, a gentlewoman of good family. *Of course we are low*," added she, with bitter emphasis, talking in a corner to young Mr. Swinton, "because we have little money. Yet I for one do not accept this tone. I suppose I may speak as well as Mrs. Tollemache? Suppose *I* ask who she was, or was to tell every one, in a loud voice for all the room to hear, that she was a Miss Roberts—"Biddy Roberts" she was known to some of the old gentlemen here—and a surgical instrument maker's daughter, who had picked up a broken and disreputable lord's cousin? We have all trials, Mr. Swinton. I have my little purgatory here, and have to suffer—O, how much! No one would

guess it, indeed, or would care much if they did guess." No one, indeed, would guess it from Jenny's rosy cheeks, for she was at pains to hide her troubles from the cold and prying.

Young Swinton was deeply interested in the girl who was so persecuted. This was the first woman, perhaps, who had treated him with an earnest and deep respect such as is paid to gentlemen of fuller years. "You should not say," he answered, "that *nobody* feels for you. Why should you suppose so, Miss Bell?"

"Why, because I never hear a kind word scarcely—I have to fight my own battles; and I think it is best to be vindictive, defiant, and independent;—Heaven forgive me if I do not think so sometimes! You, Mr. Swinton, are good natured, and listen kindly to my complaints; but they will change you presently. No, I don't mean that; but they will tell you their stories, and you cannot help being persuaded; for this is the way," Jenny added, sadly, "it has been from the beginning."

There was an implied homage and respect

in Jenny's words which deeply affected young Mr. Swinton—a hint as though he were a power of great strength in the community. It was hard to describe the wistful sympathy with which he looked at her. Some of that cloud of uncertainty which hung about Jenny's position had reached him—her curiously undefined status; but it only added to the romance. He liked that little bit of unconventionalism.

“Mrs. Tollemache,” continued she, “would like to crush me, and thinks she *can* crush me, because she is well off. She will see a generous man speaking to me and good natured to me, and she will say some of her coarse speeches to *him*—pretend, I suppose, that she had met his sister somewhere. I know her regular course.” And Jenny's eyes flashed and her cheek grew more coloured as she dwelt on this story of her wrongs.

On the whole, this *confidence* was very flattering to the young man, and she seemed quite a “heroine” to him.

CHAPTER THE TENTH.

FRIENDS TO THE RESCUE.

YOUNG Swinton was sitting with the Lepell family. They were simple, gentle, faithful girls, and talked shyly, but with the freest confidence. They reported to him eagerly a conversation they had had with Jenny only that morning. She had spoken almost with enthusiasm in his praise. "We can see," they said, "you have made *a great friend* of her already. She says that you are so kind; and, above all, so *delicate*. Was not that her *word*, Lucy?"

"And so clever," said her sister, "so full of knowledge of the world, and wisdom."

At the praise of "kindness" the youth gave no sign of extraordinary pleasure; but

at the "knowledge of the world," his face glowed furiously with the blushings of unconcealed delight.

"She *is* a fine creature," said he, warmly. "Do you know, I was attracted to her from the first. She has told me her whole little history—that is, *nearly* her whole history; one of the most interesting, artless stories you ever heard. And, do you know, she is quite friendless. The cruel women here have made 'a set' at her. And you have no idea of the gallant, independent way she has met them. I like to see a girl of *that* spirit—and—I have seldom met one like her."

He had, indeed, for he had met but few girls in his life. "I declare, here she is," he said, rising.

She was coming along as just described, with her veil of thick hair down on her shoulders. She stopped for a moment—*only* a moment—to speak to this ardent and admiring youth.

"I won't stay," she said, "Mr. Swinton. Oh! I can't stay. You shouldn't see me this way. But how can I help it?"

"See you!" said he. "Oh, Miss Bell, what fine hair! I have never seen such hair." (That is, in the whole course of his large experience of hair that had been displayed before him in a similar way.)

"For shame," said Jenny, in much confusion, "to be amusing yourself with poor *me*! Do you know I was near having it all cut off last week, like a nun!"

She went back to her room, and sat in the easy-chair that was there. For she felt a pleasant fatigue after her severe exercise. She thought how pleasant life was at an hotel after all, and what friends she was making. "Poor little Jenny," she said, half aloud—and she always thought of herself, though a natural and pardonable fiction, as "little Jenny"—"she may do very well yet!" At this moment there was a knock at the door. "Come in," said Jenny, a little pettishly. (She had been thinking of a little nap.) It was the maid, Mary—her own particular body-servant. "What is it, Mary?" said Jenny, unclosing her eyes. "Come in, Mary! Don't wait at the door."

Of the little coin called civil speeches

she always lavished to the servant class, propitiating them during her stay, and exciting reasonable hopes, which, it must be said, she never disappointed. Was there not an unrecognised *tiers état* below stairs, who had a strange and strong voice in the commonwealth. This constituency unhappily is only to be purchased up. Mary had a paper in her hand, and there was a curious expression on her face.

"From Mr. Bird, miss," she said; "and please he said I was not to go down without an answer."

"How odd," said Jenny. It seemed like her bill, and she knew it at once. Long as an invoice, with an appalling list of items. A glance was sufficient.

"Very well, Mary. Thank you, Mary. I am sure it is all quite right. They never make a mistake *here*. Wonderful!"

"But I was to take back an answer, miss. Mr. Bird is waiting below, and I was to give a receipt."

Jenny's brow contracted.

"Oh, nonsense, Mary! This is not life or death. Tell him I will see him about it."

When Mary was gone, Jenny thought it over. "That creature is losing his head," she said. "What can he be at?" And she thought that there was a change in his manner that morning. "He is a poor fool," she thought. "Or that stupid maid has bungled her message."

Still she was uneasy. She got up hastily and began her toilet. She took some pains with it. She put on the little gold cross—her mamma's cross. There were other ornaments, too, which belonged to the deceased, and which through a pardonable little fiction, based on regret at this loss, had with her the fancied potency of "charms." When the dressing was finished, what with the bathing and the little snatch of sleep, and the arranging of her hair, and the deceased relative's ornaments, the general air and effect was surprisingly good. She tripped down smiling to herself. It was about three o'clock, and in another half hour it would be high water, so to speak, on the Prado—on the promenade. It would glisten with raiment. The beaux and belles would be out. Mr. Bird was waiting at the foot of

the stairs, looking out, on guard, as it were, at the sea through the open door.

"You sent me up this dreadful thing," said Jenny, shaking the paper playfully. "What does it mean? They make me ill. They give me headaches; I have to lie down after them. It was very, very wicked of you, Mr. Bird. I begin to think you are angry with me, do you know, I do." And Jenny's face fell into an expression of half pouting, half contrition, the combination of which was very pleasing. A perfect Goth, thought she.

"I have nothing to do with that," he said, stiffly. "We require weekly settlements; it's a rule of our Company. The books are to be made up to-night; so I must request——" And he looked towards the glass case.

"Certainly—oh, *certainly*," said she, "if it is a matter of course. The very first thing when my aunt comes, and I expect her every morning."

Mr. Bird asked quietly, "Then you will have to wait until that lady arrives?"

Jenny gave a look of surprise at his in-

telligence. "Yes, Mr. Bird. She is *dreadfully* fond of me—calls me her 'little pet.'" And this she said after a little confusion, as though it were a little "immodest" in presence of a gentleman.

"Oh, then *now* I understand you," said he, hastily. "I must ask you to step in here." And he opened a door of a little room next the glass case, as if it were a cell, and which was his office, and invited her to enter. Jenny shrank back a moment, but she sacrificed the modest scruples that were rising in her.

"Now," said he, closing the door firmly, "this will simplify the matter. Now, look here, Miss Bell. This sort of thing will not do in this hotel; you shouldn't have tried it here; we are too respectable for that, and too clever. Now, I don't want any public business or confusion—that *would* injure us; but the Company are *determined* to stop it. We lost by a Frenchman last month; we lost fifty pounds last year by an English adventuress."

"Adventuress!" said Jenny, drawing up. "This extraordinary language, sir——"

"Hush!" said he; "that was what *they* said. But see here. This is mere matter of business. I want to speak plainly. We give you till to-morrow to settle this business, and, if not settled then, however painful it may be——"

This was language to a lady—a lonely, unprotected girl—who had no brother or husband! He dare not speak so if she had. She saw she might as well appeal to a stone as be piteous or pathetic with *that* heart. She drew herself up.

"This is manly—this is generous! How can you attempt to address a lady in this manner? You shall repent it, if there is law in the country."

"So the lady said. But this is nonsense — all thrown away. Now, mind, I have given warning. I have a great responsibility in the charge of this large establishment, and a duty to my employers. You should try and get your aunt here before to-morrow, or if not——"

"But you know I can't—you know I can't," said Jenny, in a tumult of agitation; "there is no time. But I tell you what—I

shall leave this moment, and not stay a moment longer to be insulted and——”

“No, no,” said he, calmly; “I can’t allow *that*. To-morrow, if you like, when we have settled this matter one way or the other. Now, I won’t detain you; here is your bill.” And he opened the door.

Jenny came out with a rustle, but in reality in extreme terror—her “good” eyes flashing and her cheeks flaming with the “heat” of the situation. She was not likely to humiliate herself in such a situation, or to cringe to a creature of this sort. In her face were contempt, a little defiance, a little grief, and a sense of helplessness; and all these signs Mr. Lepell, who was passing by hastily to join his daughters, saw. He was not a little puzzled and astonished.

“Miss Bell,” he said, “I fear you have had some bad news. I fear—I beg your pardon, but I did not mean——”

Jenny brushed away something from her eyes, and gave him a grateful smile. “Don’t speak to me now,” she said, softly; “I am very unhappy; but later perhaps I shall be more composed, and then——”

He told this little mystery to his daughters, who were sitting with young Swinton on the green benches.

“It was like a thing in the play,” he said, sadly; “the door suddenly opened, and she came out so excited and with her eyes flashing so—really quite a fine-looking creature.”

“Came out from where?” said the youth, with great curiosity.

“From that door next the book-office.”

“That is Bird the manager’s room—a hanged stuck-up fellow as ever I saw—thinks himself too good for his place. I wonder how people talk to him or stand him. He serves out his words as stingily as he does his made dishes at dinner.”

He looked to the door for the heroine—for such she was fast growing into—to appear. He waited half an hour, growing more and more distraught every moment; then got up, walked a little among the gay company until another half-hour had gone by. It was clear she would not come down. From the higher and upper windows of the establishment the disconsolate youth was no

doubt descried by faithful eyes as he wandered listlessly up and down.

Dinner came round again. The people poured in. Not until it was just beginning did Miss Bell glide down. Young Mr. Swinton could not but notice with sympathy her sad, drooping face. She did not speak to her neighbours. Young Swinton never had seen so remarkable a change in mortal woman—in, of course, all his experience. After the dinner, and the company had poured out into the open air for the short time of light that was left, he flew at once to the side of that crushed and drooping girl.

“Oh, Miss Bell,” he said, “I saw you during dinner. There has something happened, I know.”

Jenny gave him a charming smile, which, with his penetration, he could see *was an effort to hide what she really felt*.

“Nothing—nothing,” she said, “in the world. Only woman’s troubles. You remember what I said the other day about having no friends. Well, that has been just proved to me only more forcibly.”

"No friends!" said he, eagerly. "You *have*, Miss Bell. Here is one—*here* beside you—that would help you in any way he could. I can't do much, but anything I *can* do——But you would not tell me. You will say that you do not know me long enough to put such confidence in me."

"Know you long enough!" said Jenny, wistfully, and in tones of the deepest mournfulness. "Know you long enough! Ah! do you know *me*? I am afraid not. Have you not been one of the few that have been kind to me—the only one, indeed, in this wilderness of cold hearts, that has been delicate or considerate, and generous to the poor lonely girl! No. But it is *better* that I should fight my own battle *alone*, as I have hitherto done. Better to go out into the world at once!"

"Go out into the world!" said he. "Do you mean, leave this place, Miss Bell?"

"I may tell you that much," said she, with a very sad smile. "I have secret enemies here, it seems. It is a sad and a long story, but you would be astonished if I were

to tell you, and what grand people concern themselves in persecuting a poor girl that they think is friendless."

"Shameful—disgraceful!" he said, excitedly. "I know whom you mean. She came up to me to-day, in her coarse way, with some story of having met my mother. I don't believe a word of it, and all but hinted as much to her. I was thinking of you, Miss Bell, and she did not take much by *that*."

"Oh!" said Jenny, in deep gratitude, "*you* did this!"

"I did, indeed," he said. "I wish you had seen me. But I know what it is, too, besides. That fellow that walks about—the hotel man—has been at some of his tricks. You will tell me if I am right."

Jenny looked round in alarm, but dropped her eyes with an expression of humiliation, as though *her secret had been found out*.

"Oh, I have it—I see it!" said young Swinton, with triumph. "He has been *daring* to—Leave it to me. I'll go to him. I'll give him a lesson."

"No, no," said she, in real alarm. "You

will ruin me. Oh, you could not. He has been—yes—but *how* did you find out? I must only bear it.”

“It is insufferable—unbearable!” interrupted Mr. Swinton, warming up. “*I* know what that fellow is. I can see the way he goes.” (Only that morning the manager had treated the young man a little cavalierly in respect to some rooms, for he was only a boy, and a single boy, with no family, and a losing customer.) “I have a good mind to write to the secretary of the Company. My uncle knows all these sort of people.”

“Write to the secretary,” said Jenny, reflectively. “No; it is better to treat these things with contempt—bear them in silence—that is the common expression, but a very good one. Let the strong fight the battle—the weak must only bend to the storm.”

“*Do* tell me your story, Miss Bell,” said the young man, with a grand air of patronage and protection. “Would you trust me? I will see you through it, I will indeed.”

The grateful look, the swimming eyes,

that were turned upon him, were his reward.

“When my aunt comes,” she said, “she who is my only friend in the world, it will all be right, I suppose. But how can she? She is helpless at this moment—she was full of health and strength a week ago—recurrent neuralgia, that makes her shriek with pain. Who can help or anticipate these things? Would it not be unfeeling—the depth of heartlessness—to worry a woman in agony about my little affairs? But can a man like *that* understand delicacy? *You* can. *You* see it all. But he, set on by the people that, shall we say, to be charitable, do not love me, comes to me ferociously, with his wretched paper in his hand, and threatens. But I shall go. I could not bear to be exposed to this treatment. I have some pride left, Mr. Swinton; though there are people, Mr. Swinton, who think it too great a luxury for the poor; and if he were to go down on his knees, and apologise a thousand times over, I shall never stay.”

She was gone. She had floated away into the house, leaving her young confidant

in great excitement. "What did she mean by a paper?" he thought. "I can *not* understand it. And her aunt in the neuralgia. Why should *he* insult her on account of *that*?" By this it will be seen that our youth had not the far-seeing qualities and intuition that he boasted of. "But she is a fine creature—a glorious, splendid creature. I so like her spirit. But what can she have done to him? Everybody has a right to stay in an hotel—so long," he added, "as they settle their way. By Jove!" he said, with a start, "could the fellow have been thinking of *that*? Oh, I see! And the aunt in the neuralgia. *I* see it. The nurses not able to speak to her, or show her letters, and she herself not able to write. And the poor thing here looking out for the post. And her delicacy in suffering in silence, and not telling me a word. But *I* made it out—worked it out by putting two and two together. She tried hard to keep it dark. I suspected it all along, and *got* it out of her." And, in great satisfaction at this theory and its successive steps—which, indeed, were inconsistent with each other,

and scarcely founded in fact—the youth walked slowly away into the hall, full of tremendous resolves. He had a slight acquaintance with the young lady in the glass case, who was a showy young person, always fresh, and brilliantly dressed, and a pleasant object to the gentlemen's eyes as they passed through the hall. She kept the cigars. Young Swinton went to her to get his case filled. He liked this better than having one brought to him in a wine-glass, as was the custom. "Full—pretty full, now, Miss Cope," said he. "What's this I hear? Is Miss Bell going away? What's the meaning of that?"

The young lady felt kindly towards this ardent and honest boy, and was not indisposed to talk to *him*. Colonel Bowyer, who had early distinguished her with some attentions, she had repelled promptly, and checked that officer's further advances.

"Why on earth is she going?" said Mr. Swinton, bluntly.

Miss Cope felt that curious repugnance for Jenny which was common to nearly all the ladies of the house. She put her hand lightly on the great open ledger beside her.

“Running on a long time, sir,” she said, pleasantly; “a very long time, too—often furnished, and no settlement.”

“But,” said he, with curling lip, “there may be reasons, Miss Cope—I had to wait a whole week in Liverpool expecting remittance. I never spent such a time in my life. But no one could say that *I* was in want of money! I suspect *my* estate could pay a good many hotel bills. You don’t know the truth, Miss Cope. She is waiting for her sick aunt, who is not able to stir hand or foot with the neuralgia, and who can’t read or answer letters, or be talked to on business.” The youth, for the moment, really believed in this picture, which was, in fact, only his own theory.

“Oh, I dare say. Most likely, sir,” said the young lady, growing cold, for she had a woman’s instinct as to the cause of this advocacy. “I suppose, as the lady says so——”

“And all,” continued the youth hotly, “for a wretched five-pound note. I am astonished at Mr. Bird, I am, indeed. If it was known, it would ruin his hotel.”

The young lady was now hostile. “Five-pound note,” she said, hastily turning over

the leaves of the ledger, "twenty-three pounds seven shillings is a little more than that. We can't understand these things. Every *lady* and gentleman pays their bills here, even are glad to do so before the time, and there can be no exceptions." And she retired with a rustle into the more solid room behind the glass-case.

"Only twenty pounds. I worked *that* out," he thought, with great complacency. "Poor girl! How every *one* of them are down upon her; every one in the house. It is really amusing. *I* am her only friend. I am sure she is very clever and original." And even if for the moment he thought there was something a little odd in this behaviour—something he would not find in Miss Young or Miss Grace Darling, and other more regular young ladies of his acquaintance—still, it was a very pleasing irregularity—a kind of Bohemian piquancy—which was new and not unpleasant. He ruminated for a moment. "By Jove! I will," he said at last. "And what a surprise!"

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

THE MANAGER'S DEFEAT.

OLD Mrs. Tollemache, coming in from her walk, with short steps, and using her long parasol like a stick, and talking loud to her train, as she was giving words of command, was met in the hall by Mr. Bird with many obsequious bows. There was a very inviting chair there, and she dropped into it for a moment, while the train swept on.

"Oh Bird," she said, "I am tired, as tired as a horse. Who came in to-day? Who was the large creature in the bonnet?"

"Another clergyman," said Mr. Bird, answering the spirit of the question, "Mrs. Twells—rector of some place in the south."

"And tell me now, Bird—that woman Bell—is she gone yet? I didn't see her to-day."

"No, ma'am," said Mr. Bird, with complaisant satisfaction. "But I may tell you that this is likely to be her last night. I had to speak very plainly to her. We couldn't let it go on. The fact is, I have found out that your view of her doings was quite correct. Not the thing at all, and the Company has been imposed on, I *begin* to be afraid."

"You might have known that long ago, Bird," she replied, with some scorn. "A man in your place, Bird, should keep his eyes staring wide open and take advice. I knew what she was, the moment I put *my* eye on her."

"You have seen so much of the world, Mrs. Tollemache," Mr. Bird said, almost humbly.

"Nonsense! I have common sense. Why, it's written on her in big letters. It's a discredit to you to have let such a creature in! Look at the way she goes on with the men. Ah, Bird, you must go to school again. An old woman like me can give you lessons.

However, I am very glad she's going. And how did you manage it?"

"It's discreditable. A bill over - due weeks. The usual story about an aunt or friends coming. When I heard *that*, I saw it at once. If the thing is not settled to-morrow by twelve, I shall have to take measures. I suspect that by that time the bird will have flown; for though we might have police, and that sort of thing, the Company are against it—quite against it. You know there is so much written off every year for losses of this sort, it is almost unavoidable."

Mrs. Tollemache grumbled. "It is too good treatment for her. I'd have her put in a cell on bread and water for a month. It's much too good for her. It would give her a lesson. What business has she 'cocking' herself up with decent people? Serve her right." And she went up slowly, but in good spirits, wheezing a little painfully, to Take the Chair in the drawing-room.

Jenny came in presently, very sad and drooping. Naturally, there was a heavy weight on her soul. No wonder. She had

a miserable and uncertain future before her. She knew not what side to turn to. Her only friend was this poor good young Swinton, whom Mrs. Tollemache called "that gim-cracker snob"—a curious but favourite expression of hers—and she had charged him specially to say not a word to the Lepells. It was to be *their* little mystery. Therefore the youth was very reserved with that family.

"Don't speak to me to-night," she said to him in a low voice; "my *last* night, I suppose. (You won't understand this, but I know a cruel, garbled version will reach you after I am gone.) That Mrs. Tollemache, who hates me so, will sacrifice *you*. I would not like *you* to suffer on *my* account."

"Let her do her worst," said he, proudly. "I defy her. I court her anger. But as for your going to-morrow, I don't quite believe it. There is no knowing what may happen. We never can guess what may turn up, as the man in the story says."

Jenny shook her head. This was well meant, but unintelligible consolation. The youth knew what *he* himself meant.

"Never mind," he said ; "we shall see."

The next morning, Mr. Bird had to go to a neighbouring town, and was away some time. As he came back, walking by the shore from the railway station, he saw Miss Bell in a light *demi-toilette*, tripping back from the bathing. She was in great spirits, and looking very captivating. He fell into a sort of calm anger. "Does she mean to defy us and the Company? She shall find *that* out." He had, indeed, been hoping, as he had told Mrs. Tollemache, that the first news that would welcome him on his return would be the private disappearance of Miss Bell. He took a short cut to the door, and was waiting in the hall by the time Jenny reached it too. She came tripping in—her veil of hair down upon her shoulders—and in her highest spirits. The depression of the night before had vanished.

"I want to speak to you. Will you step in here a moment?" he said, brusquely.

Jenny shook her head. "Not now," she said, quietly ; "perhaps later. If you have any message, you can send it up."

"Come," said he, standing suddenly be-

fore her, and stopping the way, "this won't do, my good young lady. I am not to be treated in this way, nor the Company either."

"*Sir!*" said Miss Bell, drawing herself up, and flashing defiance at him.

"No, nor will that do either," he said. "I must request you to walk in here, unless you wish to be exposed before the whole house. You don't know your position here. A word more, and I could have in police, and what not. Now, will you settle your account with the Company?"

"HOW DARE YOU?" said Jenny, almost hysterically. "I don't want to speak to you on that subject; you shall repent of this, sir. This is manly—open—indeed! You think I am unprotected; but I have friends, and you shall answer for it."

"Oh, come," Mr. Bird was beginning, contemptuously, when from the door of the glass case came an excited figure and glowing face; a tremulous voice spoke.

"I have heard him the whole time, Miss Bell," the voice said—it was a very young voice. "I was witness to his conduct.

Come away with me ; I shall protect you. I shall not stand by and hear it. You have *one* friend, at least, that shall save you from insult."

"I insult no *lady*, sir," said Mr. Bird, growing excited himself. "Do you know what sort of person this is you have become the champion of? You are a little young, sir, permit me to tell you, and have not seen much of the world. This lady has been playing fast and loose with the Company. We have all sorts of persons to deal with, and we are not going to put up with it any more, I can tell you."

The youth spoke up with extraordinary force and spirit.

"It is a libel, sir—a vile, base libel—and a lie too."

Jenny was weeping hysterically ; the youth looked at her. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself ; and depend upon it you shall hear more of it. You have dared to talk of police to a lady, a guest in the hotel—I heard you, sir. My uncle Swinton knows all these Companies and secretaries, and is a director of everything. Take my arm, Miss

Bell. Don't mind. You have friends, I can tell you. Come!" And he led her away proudly.

His confident manner had filled Mr. Bird with some doubt and confusion. There was indeed a General Swinton that was director of financial associations, banks, railways, hotels, and a hundred such things. Write to the secretary! who was a sharp, quick man, with a policy for the Company different from his (Bird's), which he considered "old fashioned," and with whom he had had some sharp discussion. Yet, here was an adventuress—"a female sharper"—who was preying on the hotel——

"Stuff!" he said; "it won't do; it could not be put up with. No company could stand it. What airs, indeed! A person like that to talk to me in *that* style. And to get hold of a child. I'll bring it to a crisis this very night, if there's law or police in the country."

He walked angrily into the glass case. The neat young lady was still at her accounts—with an open cash-box. Every morning thus money came into her bank, as depart-

ing guests paid their accounts. She handed her little list over.

"A good deal this morning," she said; "close on a hundred and fifty pounds. Wilsons, Smiths—here is the list. Miss Bell, and——"

Mr. Bird started back.

"Miss Bell—do you mean, she has paid her account?"

"Yes, sir, in full."

"And when—where? Why was I not told? What's the meaning of all this?"

"Oh, last night, sir; I thought you knew."

Mr. Bird groaned. "Good gracious! How unfortunate! What *are* we to do?"

Coming out from dinner, as usual, Mrs. Tollemache, a little flushed, came up to him.

"That woman isn't gone yet, Bird. Are you *humbugging* me?" She leant very strongly on the middle syllable.

Mr. Bird drew up. "No, ma'am, I don't mean that. But the fact is, I fear we have fallen into a mistake—a most unfortunate business—through a—er—similarity of name,

I believe. A most respectable and proper person, Miss Bell, and—will you excuse me?”

“Oh, that’s the way, is it?” said the other, with scorn. “Oh, that’s in the wind now, is it? Well, I just tell you one thing, Mr. Bird—if you keep your respectable woman, then *I* go: so you may just choose. And what, then, do you mean,” she added, a little fiercely, “by your stories and discoveries about her?”

“It was all a mistake, ma’am,” he said, bowing humbly, “which I fell into. I am very sorry indeed.”

“That’s your own concern. But—very well. It’s all one—very well, Bird. *That’s* all.” And she walked away, fuming, to the beach, where her loud voice was heard, presently, abusing “that Bird” heartily.

There Jenny swept past her, sparkling triumphantly, with her young champion, as gay and as triumphant beside her. She had thanked him with effusion. “I am not ashamed,” she said, “to be under an obligation to you—for a few days only—as *you wish it*. No one else would have got me to do that; to no one else would I lay myself

under such an obligation. No," added Jenny, putting up her arm gracefully, and unconsciously falling into a sort of tragedy queen attitude—"no, as Heaven will be my judge, to you who have been so thoughtful, so noble, so generous, it would be an unworthy return to think of scruples and delicacy. For a day then, dear Mr. Swinton—for a day only, then."

He was deeply grateful for this privilege; for indeed he was all through a little apprehensive about the matter, which had the look almost of "a liberty." With a man, of course, there could have been no difficulty; but with a lady these things become complicated.

It was one of the sweetest evenings he had ever spent "in his whole life." He was walking along the smooth lawns of Paradise; and at periodic intervals the soft eyes of his companion, swimming with gratitude, were turned on him. That night he wrote home to his mamma a letter filled with ecstasies about the *place*, but modestly suppressing all reference to the generous act he had just performed, and to its object.

They walked together until it was almost dark ; as they came in, Jenny tripped up-stairs.

Mr. Bird was in his hall, as usual—perhaps a little uneasy. He came up to young Swinton with great humility.

“It was most unfortunate yesterday, sir,” he said ; “I have been worried all this week. You, Mr. Swinton, are a man of the world, and won’t mind if a poor worried manager isn’t as attentive as he ought to be. I hope Miss Bell, who is a very superior person—and I have been the victim of a most unfortunate mistake—will stay with us, and look the matter over.”

“I don’t wish to enter into the matter with you, sir, again,” said the youth, loftily ; “it is far better not to renew the subject. I pass no opinion on your conduct. As for Miss Bell, she will do as she thinks fit. I would recommend her not to stay. Good evening, Mr. Bird.” And he stalked up-stairs with great dignity.

“Well, if they do go,” thought the manager, “it is not so much matter. And, after

all, I *do* suspect her, for all her airs and injuries."

But next morning Jenny, coming down to her breakfast, passed him with a glance of good-humoured triumph and tolerant contempt, which gave him a little trouble. There might be danger, after all. She would go about telling the story—not the *true* one, of course—but a highly-coloured narrative; so he stopped her.

"Miss Bell," he said, "a most unfortunate mistake. I am truly sorry. I have hundreds of people to deal with, and it is hard to be always——"

Jenny smiled on him, but it was a hard smile.

"We won't talk of it, Mr. Bird. I suffered a good deal, as you may imagine. It was very unprovoked and, I must say, very cruel. A poor unfriended stranger——You might have known. All I hope is that *you* will never be exposed to a twentieth part of what *I* have endured these few hours back."

"I can only apologise and say I am sorry——deeply sorry."

“Will *that* make up to me?” said she, with a curious expression. “How can that mend what you have done—all that you have been saying to Mrs. Tollemache and my other friends? No, no, Mr. Bird; this may fall into the common routine of business, but I have not been trained in that school. Better,” she added, with a smile, “leave the matter where it is, and not recur to it. You will understand.”

Secretly Mr. Bird thought nothing better could be desired, and he was well content to leave the matter where it was.

Young Swinton had a good many friends among the single gentlemen of the place, who liked his good humour and his candour. They often joined together in a chorus of abuse as regards “Bird.” “A confounded stuck-up bear of a fellow!” “Wants a lesson given to him!” “Thinks a deal too high of himself!” These were the prevailing and almost unanimous sentiments about that gentleman. And on this encouragement being repeated, young Swinton naturally told *his* story of the treatment a noble and fascinating lady had received at his hands.

"It shouldn't be passed by," said one of the gentlemen, sympathising heartily. "It will only encourage the ruffian to think he can treat us anyhow; though I'd like to see him try it on with me—I would."

With some pride, young Swinton proceeded to tell how *he* was himself quite equal to the occasion and provided for everything. "My uncle," he said, "is a great swell among these sort of people—takes the chair at all sorts of Companies. Shouldn't be surprised if he was a director of this very thing. He knows all about it by this morning. It's been done regularly, I can tell you; formal complaint from the lady to the secretary—rude conduct of the manager—gentleman staying at the hotel saw it all. I never witnessed such gross behaviour in the whole course of my life—never."

It had indeed been done exactly as he described. Jenny had felt it her duty, for the interest of ladies who might hereafter be exposed to similar cruelty, to lay a statement of the whole case "before the Board." Mr. Swinton had written to his uncle, declaring that the place would be seriously injured—guests

fall off—shares go down—if “the thing were allowed to go on.” But the worst was—and Mr. Bird recollected it only that morning—the secretary was a scheming, ambitious man, with a brother who had a gift for “managing” hotels, and whom he had failed (by a little only) in introducing to the direction of the Grand Parade Hotel. “It was lucky,” he thought, “that I went and smoothed her down.”

Nor were her triumphs finished for that day. Her window was a front one, and commanded a good view of the railway station. She knew the arrival hour of the mid-day train, and, sifting the cloud of passengers that came forth, picked out a tall brisk man with very black whiskers and carrying a small despatch-box, as the secretary. From a tariff over her chimney she saw that this secretary’s name was “Morley Edwards.” All “complaints of incivility,” addressed to “Morley Edwards,” would receive prompt attention. She almost smiled to herself as she thought of her singular animosity to “that little wretch below.”

The gentleman with the black whiskers

and the despatch-box walked boldly into the hotel with an air of proprietorship. It really *was* "Morley Edwards" himself. Miss Bell smoothed her hair with wonderful rapidity, patted her face lightly with some cotton which she took out of a china pink box, touched her dress here and there, and went down stairs to the hall.

"Morley Edwards" was at the bureau window talking to the young lady who resided there. Mr. Bird was unaccountably absent; he had been sent for. Jenny tripped up to the window. She stood beside Morley Edwards, and asked the young lady softly where she could see Mr. Morley Edwards. That gentleman turned round, and, looking at her with a secretarial instinct, asked, in his turn, if she was Miss Bell.

The rest may be conceived. The tribunal sat on the unhappy manager in his absence. Miss Bell told her story with reserve, and even humanity, and seemed to be overpowered by the acumen and instinct of the skilful judge, from whom it was impossible to hide anything. Young Swinton, the director's nephew, told his story. Morley Edwards

heard everything—made a note of everything; and when, late in the day, the accused came home—quite unconscious of what had taken place—he found that he had been virtually tried and convicted in his absence. The secretary had a cold quarter of an hour's interview with him. The whole should be laid before "the Board"—that awful Council of Ten for managers and secretaries.

Before the day was out he was with Miss Bell once more, but in a different attitude. He was almost at her feet—grovelling on the floor.

"For God's sake, don't go on with this matter!" he said, with an agonised voice, and wringing his hands. "I shall be ruined! If I am dismissed a second time, I shall get nothing elsewhere! I have a wife and children all dependent on me! I shall not know where to turn to!"

She said afterwards, describing the scene, and said it with great justice, "Just as if I had been the cause of his misfortune! Why should he reproach me, poor man."

"I know," said he, interpreting this look, "I should have thought of this myself.

But how could I know? There are people that come here as nice as ladies—nicer, indeed, than any ladies. It was very foolish—very improper—and I do most *humbly* ask your pardon. But you will not have me turned out in this way?"

"And yet," said Jenny, sadly, "if I had appealed to you in this way and humbled myself to you—which, indeed, I did—and begged for time and for a little mercy, how little I should have found! It did not look as if I was going to obtain it. But that Providence found me friends at the right moment, I should now have been turned out into the street, and subjected to Heaven knows what indignity! Thank God I have been spared. *that*. You do not know what I have gone through these last few hours. It is a wonder my hair has not changed its colour." And she let her hands glide over that smooth soft hair, as if to assure herself by touch that no such misfortune had occurred.

"But," he said, piteously, "you will not think of it. I am sure you will not be hard on a poor man. I am unworthy of your

notice. A word from you," he added, "will do. If you and Mr. Swinton were to go to him and speak earnestly."

Jenny was truly concerned to see this picture of humiliation.

"What can *I* do—poor I? I feel for you, indeed I do. Do you suppose they would heed me? It is in Mr. Swinton's hands. You must try him. I don't like even to think of it. It is like a nightmare," she added, trying to shut it out with her hands. "As for putting myself forward in the matter—no," she said, shaking her head calmly. "I must try and wipe it out. It is a hideous page in my life. Good-bye, Mr. Bird. *I do indeed forgive you*—don't let *that* disturb you—and wish you everything—*everything*."

Before a week was out, the Board had met and dismissed the manager for this reckless behaviour, which had all but fatally compromised the hotel, and had appointed Arthur Edwards, Mr. Morley Edwards's brother, to the office.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

MRS. LONG OF EATON.

THE story soon got abroad in the house, and was the topic of absorbing interest, like a bit of telegraphic news. Miss Bell became the heroine of the place. Every one looked with interest at the young person who, without friend or support, had single-handed fought and defeated, with great loss, the cruel manager who would have crushed her. Young Swinton, full of pride and sympathy and love, we may be sure told of his share in the battle. "I found it out very soon," he said. "I saw what was going on. That mean fellow thought that she was alone, and

without any one to stand by her. And she is so delicate and sensitive, that I think she would have died before she would have told any one. I have not bad eyes, you see, and a thing or two made me suspect."

The place, too, took different views. Full white waistcoats rather lamented Bird, and their pleasant chats in the morning. "He was a very civil, decent fellow, was Bird," Mr. Boxer said, delivering the funeral sermon; "knew his own place perfectly, and never was free or presuming. I think they'll injure the house by the change. This new fellow seems above his business. I suppose they know their own business best; and it's their own look-out. But the Sunday dinners have not been the same since Bird left."

But on Mrs. Tollemache the effect was more marked still. She was furious at the dismissal of her favourite, who was, indeed, her vizier.

The new man had brought more republican and impartial principles. He had made no distinction. Nay, when her ladyship had early sent for him on some grievance which she wanted removed in

an exceptional and almost complimentary fashion, he had said plainly that it couldn't be done, and was against the rules. On which she began a sort of agitation, and never ceased inveighing against the new ministry. But what really touched her was the behaviour of the heroine, who on this victory seemed to emerge more from her retirement, and took a more prominent part in the busy concerns of men. She seemed, indeed, to court battle on the open table-land of the country; whereas, before, she had kept under cover of the shrubs and under-wood. Her company, too, was sought by very many of the gentlemen, and some ladies. She was looked at and pointed out with curiosity, and presently with interest. People like to look at the winning man in a race; a division; even in a prize fight. None, however, were so generally pleased as the Lepell family. They came up to her. "We are all so glad, Miss Bell," said Mr. Lepell, kindly taking her hand. "And, indeed, we all felt for you with that rude person. We knew nothing of it. But if you had consulted me, we would have

helped you in any way we could. It was shameful!"

Jenny's eyes fell with gratitude on these kind people. "How good! how kind of you," she murmured. "Indeed, I knew it! *Indeed*, I believed it. But I had reasons. I have a long journey before me in the world, perhaps a sad and a troubled one. If I do not learn to fight my own battles, and rely on myself, what am I to do. This is a cruel training, but necessary."

"And," continued he, "we were thinking, if you would be able to spare a little time, we should be glad to have you down at Mount Lepell—our place."

"Yes," said the two girls together; "we should all be so glad."

"We should take care of you there," said he, warmly. "In fact, you must promise us before we go."

"Before you go!" said Jenny, starting. "O, you don't tell me that——"

"Yes; I have promised to take them to Baden, or some gay place. They want to see a little foreign life. But we shan't be long on our travels—we shall be home at

Mount Lepell in the autumn, where you really must make up your mind and promise us to come."

"Going away!" said Miss Bell, very sadly. "I must train myself to that, too. It is the song I am always hearing. Just as I begin to know—to like—then it breaks in. But thanks, thanks! Perhaps some of these days I should, indeed, like to see that dear Mount Lepell; and if it depended on myself——"

"You spoke of an aunt, I think," said Mr. Lepell, "whom you expected to join you here. If she wouldn't think us uncere-
monious, or forward, and would dispense with a regular introduction——"

"Oh, my aunt!" said Miss Bell, sadly; "even that little hope, on which I relied—we shall never see *her* here."

"I am so sorry—so grieved," said he.

"It is not *that*," said Jenny, sadly. "No; nothing that any one would——only one more to this little list of troubles. I dare say I shall get over them all, one by one. Someway people set themselves to persecute me—a little—and my poor aunt. But it is

a long story. And *now* I know she won't come to Penwillion."

The cheerful way this girl met each fresh blow affected them.

"Always keep up that hopeful temper, dear Miss Bell," said he, "and you need fear nothing."

But nothing could exceed the admiration of Colonel Bowyer, to whom the whole train of incidents was narrated. He broke out of his ordinary coldness. "I like a woman of that sort," he said, "that can fight her own battle. She doubled that man up, and I am cursed glad of it. Hang it! I don't mind telling you now, Pope, but when I tackled her the other day—quite free and easy, you know—I declare if she didn't get up the propriety business, and froze me off. I felt like a fool. Nothing could be better than the way she did it. I give her every credit, even though it was against myself. Such an artful, clever, spirited dodger. No tricks with her. I say, I suppose you'd better bring her, as they say, as she *will* have it that way—just to humour her."

"So sorry," he said to Jenny, when this formality had been gone through in the most scrupulous manner.

But Jenny received the proposal for this new acquaintance with doubts, and even expressed alarm.

"Ah, now, that's just it!" said Mr. Pope. "He's so sorry about that mistake—inferentially sorry. He took you for another girl, Miss Bell. On my soul he did. You know he's so near-sighted—of course you do."

Jenny shook her head. "I know nothing of your friend," she said. "Naturally, I, whose position is a little—you know—must be doubly careful."

She was gracious to the colonel. Perhaps she saw that he was truly penitent. She, perhaps, had to bend to a stern necessity, through which, unprotected as she was, she could not afford to make *even one* enemy. Her dear mamma, she once told a *very intimate friend*, when talking of her unprotected, almost lonely state, had said to her, long, long ago, in perhaps happier days, "Poor, poor child! you will have to make friends of even the little cur dogs in the

streets. You do not know how useful they may be to you one of these days." And, indeed, on this principle had the young lady always acted, conciliating stray ladies and gentlemen whom she met for five minutes in a railway carriage, speaking to those who were beside her, and deprecating the possible hostility of those at a distance by kindly smiles, and extending these pleasant politics to servants, peasants, shopkeepers, people in the street, and persons of every degree. There was a useful philosophy underlying that advice of the parent about the cur dog.

But it has been mentioned that it was Mrs. Tollemache who, perhaps, suffered most by the departure of the obsequious manager. It seemed as though her authority had become suddenly weakened. The new director appeared to be insensible to rank, and even to some rough advances which she made. Then she became loud in condemnation of the place. Her coarse, strong voice was heard in denunciation of the fatal decay that had set in. She told an elderly major, with whom she

loved to commune, that it was "all going to pot." It wasn't the same. It soon wouldn't be fit for a Christian to lie down in, or to eat his meals. Perhaps, too, she found a slight falling off in the abject homage of her worshippers, for these mean religionists were likely enough to have seen the decay of power and greatness, and were looking out for a new Fetish. Naturally enough she associated Jenny with the new order of things. Jenny had caused the change of manager; the change of manager had caused the decay of faith; ergo, Jenny, &c. The calmness and sweetness of Jenny—the almost pity of Jenny in her triumph—goaded the lady of quality to fury. People actually came now and talked to her of Miss Bell, went away with an excuse to join Miss Bell, and actually came back repeating remarks of Miss Bell. "Well, what of it?" said she, with disgust. "Ye should have reporters to take down what she says. A regular schemer, my dear. Look at those fools round her! I am astonished at people calling themselves ladies and gentlemen so demeaning themselves. Why, even in her

own line of business she's a poor sort of creature. Why, at Killan's there, some years ago, there was Rosa Mills, who had all the gentlemen about her, and whom I found out with half an eye. *She* was worth looking at; but that Bell creature—'pon my word, I'd be ashamed of my own son!"

These scandalous words, often repeated, sometimes without restraint and within ear-shot of Jenny, were at last reported to Miss Bell herself. "It is really going too far," said the person who so kindly brought the news. "That dreadful old lady is perfectly ribald in her language. Something should be done to stop her. Once in a way it might be passed over, but she now makes it her song every night."

Jenny only smiled with resignation. Persecution (she imagined) was to be her lot; as well this shape, then, as another, perhaps heavier. But gradually she found that this dreadful Mrs. Tollemache was growing more circumstantial—broader and bolder in her hints—and was gaining an audience. So one noonday, when Mrs. Tollemache was in

the drawing-room, at the window, with her spectacles on, and busy with the paper that contained the list of Company and Ladies' Dresses at the recent "Drawing-Room," Jenny came gliding in, and closed the door with some mystery.

"Mrs. Tollemache," she said, "I am glad I've found you alone. I wanted to speak to you—to *remonstrate* with you."

The other laid down her paper, and, taking off her spectacles, seemed to get ready for the fray.

"Well, ma'am?"

"I am," said Jenny, looking down, "a poor friendless girl, to whom Providence has left neither father, nor mother, nor sister. I must, therefore, you see, fight my own battles—do everything, in short, for myself."

"And you can do *that* very well, ma'am," said the other, sarcastically; "you won't lose by it. What do you want with me, ma'am?"

"Is it not a little *ungenerous*, then, to lift an arm against the defenceless, who cannot

return the blow? I am sure, when you come to think of it in that way, you will see how unfair, how unequal the struggle is."

"See what?" said Mrs. Tollemache, rustling her paper angrily. "I don't follow you, ma'am, and I am busy now, so——"

"I am told," said Jenny, going on in the same sweet tone, as if she had not been interrupted, "that you are very hard on me when I am not by—that you speak a little unkindly of me behind my back—that you throw out dreadful hints and shocking stories. Kind friends on whom I can depend tell me this; but it seems to me such cruelty is incredible. I ask you now, Mrs. Tollemache, can this be true?"

Mrs. Tollemache's face glowed and blazed.

"Well, if it is?" said she; "and suppose it is? Who gives you a right to come and question me, Miss Bell? I'll take it from no one. I'll speak my mind in any hotel, house, cot, or cabin, in the country. I am not afraid of being turned out or complained of in an underhand way. I'll take no orders from you, ma'am."

“Oh, that simplifies it immensely,” said Miss Bell, greatly relieved. “Then I must ask you, plainly and decidedly, to give over this making free with my name, or inventing these dreadful calumnies about me. I am not rich, and I have only my good name to look to; I can’t afford to be slandered—and it can’t be suffered to go on.”

“Are ye threatening me?” said the other, trembling, and almost hoarse with passion.

“No, no, no!” said Jenny, eagerly; “not for the world. But, you see, no one would be safe. I am sure your own prudence and good sense will tell you. I am indifferent, but you see other people are inclined to take the matter up for me. Mr. Fearne Wellsby—who has great practice—said to me, only to-day, that he could have ten actions for slander out of all the language he has heard you use about poor me.”

“Why, you——” began the other, choking.

“Hush!” said Jenny, looking round; “Mr. Fearne Wellsby admires me, he feels for my position; and if I were only to “instruct” him, as he calls it, would begin to-morrow. I

wouldn't have that for the world. I know, indeed, you have prejudices against me, which I have tried, and tried, and tried again to remove ; but I have long since given it over as hopeless. But you will take this kind warning, and, for the future, give over abusing my poor, poor little self. Won't you go out this fine day, Mrs. Tollemache?" And she went away.

Strange to say, this private admonition had the most wholesome effect. Mrs. Tollemache did not talk loud about her enemy, but disseminated her scandal in private. But a greater trial was now coming for the Queen Regent.

One of these evenings it was known that a new guest of some mark had arrived. Her coming had, indeed, been prefigured by signs and tokens. It had been the subject of speculation and eager curiosity in the public room. Mrs. Tollemache was soon commenting loudly on the matter.

"Ah! is it *her*?" she said ; "what brings *her* here? We are not fine enough for her—not by half. We must get that stuck-up fellow, the manager, to put up St. James's,

for I wonder she condescends to breathe the common sea air! He ought to have fellers busy all day spouting bottles of Rummel's Eau de Colown! (It was thus she pronounced the name of the popular perfumer.) "Rummel's the boy for *her* money! Mrs. Long of Eaton—two names, no less! I know what she is, well. Cock her up, indeed!"

Mrs. Long of Eaton had, indeed, arrived; a lady of the first fashion, with a tranquil correctness, and an air of demure elegance that was quite new to the place. She was not pretty, but small and refined—had very little colour, which, with "a common person," would have had the air of sickliness; but, by the correct and classical dressing of this lady, was only the becoming languor of gentility. Even Mrs. Tollemache had to admit that "she put on her clothes as no other woman there did." She might have added, knew how to choose them with good taste. She lived altogether in the Reserved Seats of life—in the select pleasure-grounds, where the canaille were kept out by the lady police; and, we may be sure, would not

have been down here but for the order of Dr. Savory Moore, the physician of the lady nobility, who had ordered her down for the air. It may be added, that there came a gentleman with her, whose name people asked, seeing him with her now and again. He turned out to be only a Mr. Long of Eaton, who waited on her occasionally, and settled with the hotel people.

But there were some other gentlemen who came in her train—a large and amusing party—and some ladies; two or three fashionable couples—husbands with gay wives and gay husbands with wives. There were the Hon. Walter and Mrs. Tyler; Mr. Brinkley and Mrs. Brinkley. These very properly made “a set” of their own. They sat together at dinner every day, and walked regimentally in files and couples. Hon. W. Tyler with Mrs. Brinkley, Mr. Brinkley with Mrs. Tyler, or sometimes Mr. Tyler with Mrs. Long of Eaton, and so on. Mr. Long of Eaton was generally unprovided with a partner, and walked by himself in perhaps another part of the grounds.

The public were never tired of admiring

the elegance and variety of Mrs. Long of Eaton and her dress. She had an elegant little bonnet—not merely for every day, but for every stage of the day; and the tints of her “sea-side” clothes were the faintest and most delicate that could be conceived—they were the faint tones that run in the colours of gloves—but she lit all up by some little vivid “patch.” Even her bathing-dress was reported to have been constructed by Madame Adelaide, in town; and, taking into account the difficulties of material, and the comparatively rude usage to which it was to be subjected, it was a surprising work of art. It was a fashionable amusement of the morning to attend Mrs. Long of Eaton in procession down to the bath.

She had met Mrs. Tollemache before. She was not one of the cold and cruel fashionables who, when they “cut,” cut with a razor. She had founded a sort of new school, for she was of opinion that polite “heartlessness” and what is called “worldliness” were now getting “common” and vulgar, and that the true “fashionable” behaviour was to be gracious, and gentle, and extravagantly

polite. The vulgar could not and did not know how to do this. She was therefore gracious and kind in her welcome of Mrs. Tollemache. The firm but silvery voice of the one, the coarse twang of the other lady, mingled together. But though a little pleased at this homage, which she took for a sign of fear, Mrs. Tollemache gave out openly that she "did not like a bone in the woman's skin." "I am not too fine," she went on, with a truth that no one could gainsay—"never was, and don't set up to be." She talked of Mrs. Long of Eaton being "milk-faced" or "watery-faced," and, in her favourite expression, spoke of her as "a poor creature."

Almost at the beginning, when Mrs. Long was taking her first walk in her first procession on the strand, and the ordinary denizens were looking with wonder at this contemptuous and highly fashionable platoon, who, as Mrs. Tollemache said, were "turning up their noses, my dear, as if we were all the mud of a ditch," the languid eyes of Mrs. Long fell upon the figure of Colonel Bowyer, leaning upon the arm of his friend. She was

delighted ; she told her company that the colonel was "one of her men." And long ago, when she had first taken that excellent upper servant of hers, Mr. Long, to manage and keep a house, and when she was in her "prime," Colonel Bowyer was indeed one of her men—perhaps a little too conspicuously—for Colonel Bowyer and Mrs. Long were seen together everywhere—in drawing-rooms—in streets—in parks—in phaetons—in boats—until the public, first amused, then angry, became contemptuous and scornful. In course of time this relation lost all its novelty, and the colonel and Mrs. Long had to take different roads. Now they had met again, to his great delight, and Mrs. Long, whom he fell in with casually a few days later (to his great surprise), was equally rejoiced.

There was a mountain a few miles away, with Show Ruins kept up expressly for dining amongst, surrounded carefully with a new wall, having a guardian who hired out benches and a little summer-house for dining in. Mrs. Long, who had been ordered "exercise," thought how charming would be an expedition to Ben Tilbury—so the ruins were

called—and took counsel with her friends. The scheme was taken up eagerly by the ladies and gentlemen of her “set”—talked of over and over again by all the world. Indeed, it was discovered casually that there was only one person who knew nothing of the business. Some one, meeting Mr. Long of Eaton, asked *him* if he were going, and discovered that he had not heard of the matter.

As soon as this scheme became well known it caused great excitement and trouble. Nearly every one had been up Ben Tilbury a dozen times, but not in such company. The key to this new state of feeling might be found in the fact that the old expeditions were styled, with a plain and strong vulgarity, “pic-nics”—the new and select one was “our little fête.” Every one was anxious to go—panting, praying, and intriguing to go—and the great lady was willing to take a strong party with her, who would do as background to throw out the more select circle. Perhaps, too, she was led to this by a threat of Mrs. Tollemache which had been reported to her, who openly talked of leading another band on the same day up to

Ben Tilbury; and "*then* we'll see which of us'll go to the wall!" said Mrs. Tollemache. But Mrs. Long of Eaton came to her herself with fashionable humility. There was a curious firmness in her voice, which, though low, was almost hard in its tone.

"I wanted to speak to you," she said, "Mrs. Tollemache—to consult you about my little fête. You must take it up, too. The gentlemen are eager for it. We, I suppose, are the proper people to do it, and there will be only confusion unless there is method in the thing; and you will help me?"

Mrs. Tollemache snarled, "Oh, *I'm* of no account. I wonder you thought of me at all. Most kind of you. Of what earthly use could *I* be?"

"Oh, as for that," said Mrs. Long of Eaton, "we shall not trouble you. Colonel Bowyer and the other gentlemen will look to all the details."

"Oh, will they?" said Mrs. Tollemache. "Now, what good people there are in the world! So disinterested of the colonel!"

"Ah! Really," said Mrs. Long, without showing any effort at sarcasm, "I have not

found it so. But perhaps you would think the matter over, and let me know?"

The other lady, however, *did* think the matter over, and gave in a grudging adhesion.

It was to be very gay; it was to be on the model of something that Lady Grey de Malkin had given before, with à Watteau and champêtre flavour. It was well recollected that at that fête a kind of uniform was worn—a hint, as it were, of a pastoral dress. This was debated a good deal without reaching any decided result. But a more serious difficulty was about the company; for when the competing claims were sent in and every one was pressing to be allowed to join, "I only stipulate," said Colonel Bowyer, "for my friend Miss Bell; I don't care if we leave all the rest out."

"What," said Mrs. Long coldly, "that governess-looking woman, who is always reading novels? Why on earth should we have her? But if you insist on it—Very well, provided she dresses herself properly."

"No fear of that," said Colonel Bowyer; "I know what she can do. An uncommonly

smart creature—I wish you'd know her; regularly, you know, Mrs. Long."

"Ah, well, perhaps," said Mrs. Long, looking down her list; "if she's clever, it's a different thing, and she *does* look clever." And presently, for she had been on a visit at Bowmeadows, where Colonel Bowyer's family resided, and kept up great state and saw the best—she good naturedly allowed Jenny to be presented to her in a sort of informal way, as a friend of Colonel Bowyer's, perhaps. But on this foundation could Jenny readily provide for herself. On an early occasion she found the fashionable lady in one of that series of choice costumes which did not attract attention there so much from their taste as from their variety. The tints were too delicate. One of Jenny's gifts was a singularly correct taste in dress; and as regards appreciation, almost as trained as that of Mrs. Long herself. On this morning that lady was in a pale corn-coloured "robe," cool, faint, and delicate, and all "lit up," as she called it, with a rich deep patch of blue. The "cut" and design were truly artistic. She had little frills and edgings—

and the daintiest collars, and one out of what might be called a museum of hats, bewildering in their variety.

Thus arrayed, and waiting for a gentleman — who was not that genteel upper servant known as Mr. Long—she was good naturedly tolerant of Jenny, and suffered her to admire her dress.

“I never saw anything so tasteful,” said Jenny, almost gasping with admiration. “And the colour! Oh, the colour, that I *never saw* before. I did not think, Mrs. Long, such a shade could be made.”

Mrs. Long was not to be bought over at so cheap a price. “It is the commonest thing in the world,” she said; “you can get it in any cheap shop in town.” But this was a favourite device of Mrs. Long for being singular and unique—buying some cheap fabric (every vulgarian could get the costly ones), and beautifying it and lifting it out of coarse associations by her own “style” and charms.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.

TWO STRINGS.

COLONEL BOWYER, gentlemen latterly remarked, was getting a little assiduous in his devotions to Miss Bell. Some people of an unworldly sort, and almost pastoral turn, told each other that "something was going on," and foresaw that the colonel, now weary of a hollow succession of faces, was at last thinking of a steady life and of settling down. But other gentlemen, more skilled in the ways of a corrupt world, said, "Look at Bowyer now, at his old tricks;" and how he was "working the thing." Still, added the experienced men of the world,

she was a *deuside* knowing little shaver, and would score two to his one. And Colonel Bowyer — who had “hacked” about the world sadly, and found the men and women of the world, like the names in the muster-rolls of his corps, mere outlines and numbers, across whom he could draw a pen if he pleased at any moment—now perhaps found the hard petrification within him softening, and was “pursuing” Jenny with great ardour. “I know she’s of the regular common sort,” he said to his friend; “I could pick you out twenty like her, from the next garrison town. But, hang it, there’s a mischief about her, Pope, that takes me. I can’t account for it. There’s no use arguing it, you know.”

“You are only wasting your time,” said his friend. “*I* know what *she*’s made of, well. She’s too poor to afford sentiment. Business is business. What is a pound? as Peel asked, you know.”

“Ah! that’s all very well,” answered the colonel. “What’s a fellow’s experience to go for? I suppose I have lived some years in the world—eh? I suppose I know the

wretched tricks of men and women by this time—eh?”

“I don’t know,” said the other, independently; “many a fellow *thinks* he does. I tell you, the woman’s a hard eye. A commercial, uncommonly clever eye, I can tell you. Marriage is her profession; she’s looking out for a young fellow with money—that little ape Swinton, for instance. Bless you, she saw, in the first ten minutes, that you were a fine old English country gentleman, longing to marry a good wife, and live happily in the country.”

“Of course she saw all that—eh?” And both gentlemen laughed at this complimentary hypothesis.

“You’ll see, my friend,” said the colonel, “and before a week is out. I know where I am going—want no lamps or pilots—can give a good account of myself, too. Only wait a week or so.”

It was hard to guess what this lawless gentleman meant by his proposal of waiting a week. Our Jenny Bell, of all people in the world, could not suspect the strange fashion in which she was talked of by the two

friends; or what designs against her peace were being compassed.

She was, in fact, rather pleased by the later little gallantries of the colonel and his rude addresses. She liked the society of men who had served their country in camp and courts. She told Colonel Bowyer, with infinite naïveté, that she stood greatly in awe of his power—that one who had seen so much of life as he had—“in so *short* a time,” added Jenny hastily, meaning to correct any imputation on his age—“could be, oh so dangerous, if he pleased.” She feared him, she confessed. He could be wicked, if he liked.

“So could you,” said he, shortly—“eh? Desperate wicked. Say that we’re both of us wicked, and square the thing. Look at that woman there, that Long of Eaton as we must call her, how she decorates herself like a doll! Why, she is *all* dress. And that poor sawney of a husband she takes about with her! Would you treat yours that way, eh, Miss B.?”

“No, no,” said Jenny, devoutly. “I should not know how. I should be his

slave—his humble, lowly slave—obey his slightest wish. That is my nature.”

“Not if he was such an ass as that, I suppose?” said he. “But tell me now, would you ever think of that sort of thing—would you ever care for a man, eh? What sort of a fellow would be your style?”

“I’ll tell you,” said Jenny, enthusiastically, and fixing her eyes on him. “One of your young, clever men, who have shone in Parliament, and made a brilliant speech. One with an intellectual face. You understand.”

“Stuff!” said the other, impatiently. “What rubbish all that is. Intellectual, indeed. Some spooney-faced fellow. I have seen life enough to know what *they* are made of. But,” he added, quietly, “I understand that sort of line, and why you say it. I have seen enough of life to know *that*, too. We are always playing little games, now and then—eh? You are very clever—eh?”

Jenny looked at him steadily, and with honest eyes. Then shook her head. “I don’t catch your meaning, Colonel Bowyer.”

“No?” said he. “Well, it’s no great matter. But I like you for it, I do indeed.”

Suppose I said love you for it, would you be angry?"

Jenny's face changed. "I am a poor girl, without friends, and have no right to be angry. Suppose you *were* to say that, Colonel Bowyer, or any other free-and-easy speech——"

"Oh, come now," he said.

"Yes," said Jenny, firmly, "free and easy. I should only have to suffer in silence, or at least depend on myself. This is the lot of us poor waifs and strays; besides being left alone in the world, without the happiness of home affections, we must accept what treatment is found for us. I say nothing to *you*, Colonel Bowyer. You only fall in with the fashion. But *you know you would talk differently to Mrs. Long of Eaton, or to the young ladies you meet at balls. No, you cannot look me in the face and say you would not.*"

"Oh, absurd!" said the colonel, impatiently, yet with some admiration. "What ideas you take into your little head."

Her cheeks coloured. "Very well," she said. "You are determined to quarrel with

me. With all my heart, then. I can meet any one half way. But I tell you this much, Colonel Bowyer, I would sacrifice *any acquaintance*, no matter who he be, sooner than forfeit my self-respect. There!"

"But, I say, I meant nothing—do come here—confound her, what virtuous airs she is taking on herself. Well, let her pass. I shan't give myself more trouble about her." But he did, and was obliged to do so. "It is all tricks," he said, "and she's doing it just to play a game of hers. I can see through every step of it. But someway, Pope, I have a fancy for her. She's so infernally piquant—and what d'ye call it. Still, I'll just leave her to herself, and take down her airs a bit."

Young Swinton had seen Jenny's indignant departure, and had flown to her side. He was in the heat of that great passion as it affects boys. He had been injured, moody, and aggrieved. After his great public services in such a crisis, he was entitled, he thought privately, to eternal gratitude and affection. He clung to Jenny like a bur. He was always watching her—while affecting not to watch, and to be in-

different—from an ambuscade. He could have kept an accurate journal of all her doings in the day, and he had noted with bitter feelings the constant assiduities of Colonel Bowyer.

Jenny, as she met him, always lifted up her eyes as if asking for pity, and was the victim of a persecution.

He now came to her. “What was that man saying? I saw by your face that he had dared to make some of his familiar speeches. Why do you speak to him, or know him, Miss Bell? He is *not* the man to be intimate with; I could tell you stories, Miss Bell, about him, that are not creditable to him. You should hear the men talking of him. He is a dreadful character.”

Jenny was in great distress. She looked as who should say, “This from *you!*” and she said: “You can scarcely understand, dear Mr. Swinton. I dare not tell you everything. One day, perhaps, you shall know. But girls in my condition cannot be nice and pick and choose, like girls born and nurtured in high station, and in the lap of luxury. There are reasons. I am obliged to endure

this man. He has a secret power, and if I dared, you know——”

But young Swinton was suspicious. “I don’t understand,” he said; “we live in the nineteenth century, don’t we? Every one is protected now. We can all choose our company.”

The piteous sigh Jenny gave smote his heart. “*You can,*” she said; “you can pick and choose. And I am glad of it. And I hope, dear Mr. Swinton, you will never lose that happy privilege.”

For the moment, he would have liked to have thrown himself at her feet.

Indeed, the demeanour of Jenny to this youth was certainly mysterious, and warranted to torture his poor young heart. To an outsider, her behaviour was mysterious, contradictory, and almost impossible to explain. Ever since the Bird affair, which terminated so happily, she seemed to shun him—was a little changed. And it was odd—it seemed to him so—that this change began when her intimacy with Colonel Bowyer commenced. Yet what was the change, after all, if we take away the sensitiveness of a boyish

lover? If he had a friend and confidant, the latter would have said to him, "My dear fellow, after all, you must make allowance. What do you propose? Surely not marrying her? She is, at the least, twelve or fourteen years older. She may be more. Surely not. Your mother and guardians would not hear of it. Well, then, look at her position. She has no money herself. She has to make her way. She may like *you*, but you can't expect her to sacrifice herself altogether to your society. What if this Colonel Bowyer, who is at least suitable in years, admires her?" Perhaps ideas nearly the same as these were in Jenny's mind. Colonel Bowyer, who knew everything about everybody, had given her a great deal of information as to the Swinton family.

Moreover, she was very sensitive to ridicule. In his rough way, the worldly colonel had said to her, "What *are* you *at* with that little child? You are so deferential to him, it is quite amusing. What will the women come to, I wonder? It amuses me, really, the respectful manner you have to him."

"He was kind to me," said Jenny, sadly,

"when I wanted it, and when all the world had turned against me."

"Kind to you," said the colonel; "he is an utter donkey. I wonder you can be so taken in; but I suppose you have ideas of your own about him, Miss Bell. You are very wise, and see a long way. I'll tell you a story about him another time. His mamma is a dragon, and only some eighteen months ago came flying down to Dieppe, where the young brat was all flames and passion for a needy clergyman's daughter. Didn't she scatter them right and left—clergyman and all—and brought him home by the ear! A very dangerous woman, Miss Bell; what they call a woman of strong mind."

"I am glad of it," said Jenny, softly; "and for his sake. I wish I had my mother; we can have but *one*, you know, Colonel Bowyer. Oh, you will scoff, of course, like the men of the world. Yet I have met men of the world, who, hardened, *blasé* as they were, kept this one corner free, and clean swept. I have seen their eyes moisten, their voices tremble, as they talked of their mother, Colonel Bowyer."

Jenny spoke this encomium on filial affection quite fearlessly, and looked him steadfastly in the face, as if to challenge ridicule.

He stamped on the ground impatiently. "How you talk—what fine speeches you can make! It's a great gift. You should have a regular pulpit for yours," he added.

"You won't laugh me out of it, Colonel Bowyer," said Jenny, a little vehemently; "I am not so worldly as that *yet*, though *you* may think so."

This was a sort of pattern for a hundred little discussions of the same sort which took place between these two, each of which ended by Colonel Bowyer's walking away impatiently, muttering: "A little hypocrite—such cant! To be trying on that with *me*! I'll speak my mind to her next time, if she don't take care."

As Colonel Bowyer had told her so many details about the Swinton family, it was curious that young Swinton should have been almost as full and communicative on the score of the Bowyer family. From him

she had learned that the present Sir John Bowwater had no children, and that Colonel Bowyer was heir presumptive. That he was a wild, strange man, who had been all over the world—in strange scrapes and *esclandres*, which had happily, however, been no impediment to his social advancement. He was in the best set everywhere.

“He has done nothing dishonourable, I am sure,” said Jenny.

“Very likely not,” said the youth; “at least, I never heard of it. I don’t like him at all; but they say he has seen more life, you know, than any man of his years. And they told me, the other night, that he is sick and tired of the world—sees that there is nothing in it—and wants to marry some poor innocent girl that takes his fancy, you know—just to try the pleasure of a quiet life, as a novelty, you know.” And the youth, thinking that he had told this with considerable point and effect, but never thinking that he had unconsciously resolved a mystery which had been puzzling Jenny for a long time, laughed with foolish satisfaction.

“Many have thought that,” said Jenny, “and been disappointed. But it is only an idle story?” she said, interrogatively.

“Not at all, not at all,” said he, confidently; “in fact, I heard him say nearly as much himself. He really means it, I believe.”

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.

WATERING-PLACE GOSSIP.

MR. LEPELL and his two daughters had not gone as yet. They had heard of the coming festival ; and the kind father, looking tenderly at his girls, asked why they should not see everything that was going. And, indeed, hitherto this principle had been carried out strictly, and "anything that was going," which meant outlay of money, or of trouble, or of time, he was eager to furnish.

They were very quiet and retiring girls, small, and—as Mrs. Long of Eaton said, who had discussed them at a distance with her eye-glass up—likely to turn out pretty ; but, according to the same authority, they were

sadly wanting in style and manner. Mrs. Tollemache said, roughly, that *he* "would never make anything of them, if he were to put his eyes upon sticks."

They were the "softest, demurest yoke of little girls" (an admiring sporting gentleman's expression) that could be conceived. A cloud of innocence hovered round them both, and floated before their eyes. Adopting the technical phraseology of the same gentleman, they were perfect "matches," for sisters, being about the same height, and of the same figure. The hair of both flowed and "waved;" their faces and features were small and delicate, and even childish—not round, but tending to a "heart-shape;" their eyes were gentle and honest, and when they were questioned, always turned, by a sort of instinct, to their father's face. Some ladies said they were "sweet girls," others that they were "nice little things." They indeed, taken together, made up but the one idea. It was hard to think of them apart, and one was the "complement" of the other. They could be merry, and enjoy life to the utmost, in a peal of laughter, but for the sense of

that bereavement, the loss of their brother, whom *they* did not know so well, but whom they knew their father idolised. This cast a tone of gentle quietness over their faces, and seemed to make their eyes droop habitually. The hair of both was "rich," and seemed to run in twisted "cords" round their small heads; though the colour of one was brown, and that of the other nearly black.

There was no risk of Mr. Lepell being classed by the profane young as "fogie," or "exploded buffer," or "old-fashioned bloke;" or by any of the odious *lingua Franca* of our day, which means nothing, and has not even the merit of expressing what the words of the Regular Service are not able to express. He was a picturesque figure, tall, with an iron-grey toning about his face, a brightness in his large soft eyes. Those soft eyes were always resting on his two pretty girls.

This Mr. Lepell had been a pleasant worldly gentleman, as the world goes—had once had a seat in the House, into which he wandered now and again, and found it, on the whole, poor and listless work; had

dined out, and gone to clubs, and even played billiards. The death of his son seemed to have sobered him, and, as far as the world was concerned, he was a sort of Trappist. Only in these two girls did he seem to find warmth, and light, and air, and colour.

Some of the better class of ladies at the hotel found some amusement in this little family. One of them said it was "quite Shepherd-like and Patriarchal," took one back to "the primitive times." It was rarely, very rarely, that one could see such a pleasing sight. But Mrs. Long of Eaton had discovered that they were of a well-known good county family—that Mr. Lepell had been fellow-member for the county with Sir Arthur Hutchins; and that the girls were, accordingly, "nice, quiet, well-bred things."

When the party was projected, she went herself and arranged with Mr. Lepell.

"We must have your two nice girls, Mr. Lepell," she said. "I quite like them. They are so wise and well brought up. None of those vulgar bursts which the lower

stamp of girls indulge in. And you must come yourself, too."

Mr. Lepell answered, calmly, that he was sure they would be glad. And he thanked Mrs. Long with a dignity that seemed almost old fashioned, for thinking of them. The girls were delighted when he told them.

The great fête to Ben Tilbury was drawing on. Mrs. Long graciously met Mrs. Tollemache, the *other* fashionable royal of the place, to discuss details.

"You will have your list," said Mrs. Long of Eaton, "and I shall have mine. We must be a little select."

"Oh! oh! of course," said the other, sneeringly. "We are come to lists, are we? Are you going to put me down on *your* list? I don't understand that sort of way."

"Perhaps not," said Mrs. Long, smiling. "Most likely not. But it's the invariable rule. At our dinner last year for the French Orphans, at the Crystal Palace, Madame Rohan de Lille, the French ambassadress, and I, we had each our lists."

"Lists or no lists," said Mrs. Tollemache, "there's one woman *I* don't go with—a person that should be drummed out of the place, and her gown stripped off her back."

Mrs. Long looked at her, wondering.

"I mean that woman Bell. It's a disgrace to have her under the roof."

"Yes, she is down on *my* list," said Mrs. Long of Eaton, calmly. "She is to be one of our party. Colonel Bowyer wishes it."

"And do you tell me this, ma'am?" said Mrs. Tollemache, growing red upon her natural surface of redness. "And you are going to take up with a woman of that sort? She ought to be taken by the shoulders and put out. My idea is—and remember my words—she is no better—than you know what! And I don't care who hears me."

"You say such strange things, Mrs. Tollemache, you make one feel quite unpleasant. I really don't enter into those inquiries. It is assumed that everybody received here is proper."

"It's not assumed," said Mrs. Tollemache, excitedly. "And I tell you what, Mrs.

Long of what's-its-name, I won't be seen in that thing's company. *I'm* not going to disgrace myself, though others may. So you may manage your party, and no offence to you, without me. There's fair warning for you."

"Just as you please—quite right, Mrs. Tollemache, to follow your own judgment. Then is it understood that you withdraw?"

"I make no understanding at all in the matter, Mrs. Long of—ugh!—I don't know. But I don't go with her, mind."

"Very well, Mrs. Tollemache," Mrs. Long of Eaton said, politely, and retired.

She told the whole scene to her gentlemen late in the day, who were greatly amused. She was known to them as "Mother Tollemache."

"Such a dreadful person," said Mrs. Long, "and the coarse language she used was quite shocking! I was really not prepared to hear such words. I am not sorry, though, as she will take off a lot of dreadful people. The calumnies she uttered against that friend of yours, Miss Bell, Colonel Bowyer!"

"Oh, that's an old story," said the colonel; "where she got them I can't fancy. She may be right, for all I know."

"Oh, I don't care to inquire," said Mrs. Long, coldly; "it is of no interest to me."

In her turn, and in a far louder voice, Mrs. Tollemache gave her version of the interview.

"She wants to force that woman Bell on us. I won't have it. I'm an honest woman, and accustomed to honest women all my life. It may do very well for Mrs. Long of what's-her-name. I want to know, is that part of the new fashions, thrusting people of no character down our throats? Mrs. Long may suit herself and choose her own company—out of the streets if she likes. But she won't find me join her, or, if I know it, any *decent person that has a respect for themselves or for their family.*" As she said this, she raised her voice and looked round with a menacing air on those who still owed allegiance to her.

This air she sang very often. She preached to this text; but, alas! unavailing. The guests, true worldlings, saw that the

other potentate was stronger, that under her reign were more remunerating blessings. At most they would have liked to have made a ring in the hive, and forced the two queen-bees to fight the matter out, as the custom is in hives. But the bait of "selectness" was too strong for human nature. The serpent, embodied in that charming Mrs. Long of Eaton, was irresistible. "Really," as Tom Sudbridge said, indignantly, "we have not quite yoked our souls to that old tyrant as yet. What claim has she on us? Who has given her a title to dragoon it over us in this way? A selfish, coarse, unscrupulous old termagant, with her strong voice; it makes me ill to be in her company. *I shall go.*"

The disaffection spread every day. Mrs. Tollemache found her subjects falling away. Naturally she set all this down to the departure of Bird, and Jenny was the occasion of the fall of that great minister. "The effrontery of the woman," she said, "was getting beyond all bounds." She lost all patience when she heard her one evening, actually within a foot of her, seducing away

British-born dependents from their natural allegiance.

"*You* must come, Mr. Thompson — and come with us. We *want* a large party. Mrs. Long of Eaton is *so* kind, and has taken such trouble about it." Mr. Thompson, a fair youth, was irresolute, and glanced nervously at Mrs. Tollemache.

"You are not to go, mind," she said, lifting up her voice. "We'll have a party of our own next week. They've reasons for asking you. We're not going to be fine or select, or anything of that sort. We got on very well here before such things were thought of or introduced. You may spare your breath, ma'am, and your looks too."

Jenny threw up her eyes with resignation. "You will never understand me, Mrs. Tollemache. You think everybody is plotting all day long. You live in an atmosphere of suspicion, Mrs. Tollemache."

"Live in a what?" said Mrs. Tollemache, firing up. "I don't understand you, ma'am. I live in nothing that I am ashamed of, thank God! I hope other people, when they lay their heads on their pillows, will be

able to say that they have lived as respectably."

"And in charity with their neighbours, Mrs. Tollemache, speaking well of every one, and taking away no one's character. I hope so, indeed, Mrs. Tollemache. Mr. Thompson, you must manage it. Kind Mrs. Long relies on you."

And Jenny went away, leaving a smile of forgivenesses with Mrs. Tollemache. There were many more as irresolute as Mr. Thompson. The result was, that day by day Mrs. Tollemache found her ranks thinning. Three days before the little fête, she saw that she would be left alone. In her generation she was a wise and even crafty lady. She could subordinate even her resentments to her interests. She determined to avoid the mortification of being left wholly alone, and began to temporise. She talked with Mrs. Long on her scheme, assuming it to be in the same condition as when that lady made her proposals to her first. "Then we shall have your assistance?" said Mrs. Long. "I am very glad. I am sure it will go off very well."

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH.

THE PARTY TO BEN TILBURY.

THE morning fixed for the champêtre party was a fine one. The hotel was a scene of bustle and animation, and a small crowd assembled to see the gay party depart. The procession was mixed in its elements, being composed of carriages, and ponies, and some donkeys. Not a few were going to walk. The whole was under the command of two generals of reputation. The costumes were truly elegant—scarcely to be confected by the populace; but it was known that they were nearly the same as those worn at the French fête given last year, and directed by Mrs. Long of Eaton

and the French ambassadress, Madame Rohan de Lille. Mrs. Long had a light alpenstock, that seemed like a shepherd's crook ; and it was said that the whole dress of that lady was meant to hint one of the shepherdess beauties of Hampton Court. It was a morning dress, and not a fancy dress ; yet there was a hint of the latter, and the doubtful line was so well kept that at any moment she could retire and take her stand boldly on the former. It is only skill, and long and elegant training, that can compose these happy ambiguities.

Every one was in prodigious spirits. There was no vulgarity of conspicuous and bursting hampers. These had been sent away before, if such things had been used at all. There was to be a choice and charming *al fresco* banquet on the grass, duly and regularly served as it might be in the great room of the hotel, with no mixing of salt, or difficulties about mustard and lobster dressing, which are boisterous and vulgar traditions ; but all to be served with genteel regularity. This was to be the feature of the entertainment. Another feature

was the selectness, as it were, *within* the selectness—select wheels within selecter wheels. From the moment of starting it was to be seen that the true party was the small party led by Mrs. Long of Eaton, and that the rest were to form, as she happily said, merely a background. All the ladies of Mrs. Long of Eaton's party were clad in fine linen, and in new garments, and what with their tiny hats and short skirts, seemed to hover on the verge of fancy dresses too, and made Walking as elegant as Walking could be made. At this exhibition, of course, the rival queen, whose garb was always notoriously rude, pointed scornfully. "What do they look like?" she said. "Did you ever see such a set? Coming out in the light of day in such streamers. It's not decent, I say. As for my Lady Long of that place, *she's* like nothing proper, at all events. Oh my!" continued Mrs. Tollemache, in a prolonged groan, "just see the woman Bell! Oh my! Where did she gather *those* things?"

And, indeed, Jenny's appearance was a just subject of wonder and admiration. She had a white linen dress, that seemed to be

made of Bristol board, and of the smoothest and finest of that material; but it was her Hat, of close straw, and fashioned like a French Estaffète's, that was a miracle of elegance and of cost. How could her modest purse reach so far! And though she could spare and stint herself with Spartan firmness for a great occasion like the present, still the hat and Bristol-board dress seemed to defy months of economy. Colonel Bowyer looked at her from head to foot with pride. "You look dazzling, Miss Bell, I declare—run our leader and her friends very close."

Jenny cast down her eyes. "You have such taste, Colonel Bowyer—you have seen so much, and know so much, I was quite dreading——"

"Well, I think the hat," he said, "isn't a bad 'hit.' I take my stand on the hat. There are worse hats in the world. I am very glad you are satisfied yourself with your dress," he said, with meaning.

Jenny nodded and smiled. She let the colonel have his joke, whatever that was, or wherever it lay. She turned away to talk to young Swinton, who was always "hang-

ing about" her, latterly in a high state of sensitiveness, and actually ready to be wounded or quarrel on the first opportunity. He looked suspiciously at the Estafète's hat, and at the Bristol-board dress. "You are quite resplendent to-day," he said, "and quite dazzle the whole company. I had no idea you were going to astonish us in this way." He said this moodily.

"You would not like to see me well dressed," said she, kindly. "And I dare say that is the feeling in the minds of most people here—Mrs. Tollemache, for instance. No, I have no business to have fine clothes."

The youth coloured. "I did not mean that," he said. "You always say such cruel things to me—latterly, that is." He was fast hurrying to a grievance.

"I am a dreadful person," said Jenny, smiling. "Catherine of Russia, perhaps."

"Now, Miss Bell," said the colonel, thrusting his arm, bent, right in front of young Swinton, "we are waiting for you. Here is your pony. Chose him myself for you." And, with an air of proprietorship, he led her away, and helped her to mount, which she

did with grace, on the animal he had provided for her.

It looked a very long and very curious procession, as it wound up the heights of Ben Tilbury. The original natives, though accustomed to the regular tourists, and the regular tourist costume, were not prepared for this glimpse of town life.

The sun was high in the heavens, and hot. Happy those ladies arrayed, like Jenny, in light linens. Most of the ladies rode, and the colonel walked often beside Miss Bell's pony, and lightened the way with conversation. Mrs. Long of Eaton led on *her* pony, waited on by elegant gentlemen.

Mr. Long was believed to be somewhere behind, fifth in an open carriage, with elderly ladies. Young Swinton, watching from afar off, and readily keeping the bright Bristol-board dress in view, was inflamed to furious jealousy by the assiduities of his rival; for that gentleman, though he did not give himself the trouble to guide Jenny's steed, still kept near to her, and talked to her even from a distance, and as plainly as words could warn, warned off intruders.

His friend Pope passed him very often, and privately glanced at him.

Half way up they halted. There was to be a bivouac for half an hour. The light disorder, the gay and elegant dresses, the contrast with the wild scenery, was charming. Every one said they were enjoying themselves. Jenny was really in the greatest spirits. For the moment, as she said, she was determined to "shut out the past and the future," and enjoy the present, "as the butterflies did." She was sprightly, and ready of speech.

"Did you see The Bell?" said the colonel to his friend. "She is in great go to-day. She looks a fine creature—some way I can't keep away from her pony."

"And that hat, eh?" said Mr. Pope, meaningly; "eh, Bowyer? Don't it become her? Did she order it herself? Of course she did. She's a delightful creature, as deep as a well. I talked to her about the hat. Where did she order it? 'Ah, once and away, Mr. Pope,' she said, 'we must do these things, you know.' Uncommon clever answer, you

see—fit anything ! Fine sly girl ; I like her for that.”

“ I have met fifty girls like her,” said the colonel. But he was greatly pleased at these compliments, as his friend saw.

While these gentlemen were conversing, Jenny saw the young Swinton pass her by *purposely*. “ Come here, won’t you, Mr. Swinton ?” she said, softly. “ You have not talked to me to-day.”

He laughed scornfully. “ That is my fault, of course,” he said. “ You were persecuted and guarded by a person you disliked and hated—life a burden—no one to protect you. Oh, I understand !” And he laughed again in deep irony. This was so startling a reproduction of what was actually passing in Miss Bell’s mind, that she coloured.

“ I don’t understand, Mr. Swinton,” she said ; “ you are a little severe this morning upon poor me. What is the dreadful offence ?”

“ Oh, I have no right to say anything. The last comer is always the most welcome, Miss Bell. We don’t care for old friends, now,

no more than you would do for the hat you wore, or the dress you wore yesterday. *I can understand.*"

Jenny shook her head with a little smile, and with, perhaps, a little sarcasm. "I do not," she said; "but I am very dull and stupid. Something has happened this morning. Something has put you out, and you wish to be angry with poor me, and my poor hat."

"*Your* poor hat, Miss Bell?"

"Yes, mine."

"Oh, *now*, of course. But, let me tell you, that should not be. My sisters would not do that—nor the Miss Lepells—nor——"

"I'll not pretend to misunderstand you, Mr. Swinton," said she, suddenly turning on him. "You have no right to speak to me in this way. I remarked ever since that—that day, when you *forced* your assistance on me, you have taken this tone. It is not gentlemanly nor manly."

"Oh, Miss Bell, Miss Bell, I did not mean that. I did not, indeed."

"It looks like it, but I scorn the obligation. I consider it no obligation. There

are fifty people here that would have been proud if I would let them help me. Did I come to you? Did I ask you? And now you think, Mr. Swinton, that I should be under a load of gratitude. I don't think so at all. The moment I get home——”

“ Oh no, Miss Bell! To speak to me in this way. I don't deserve it.”

“ I may be poor, but I am proud,” said she, carelessly. “ I may speak too warmly, but I speak as I feel. What have I done to you, that *you—you*, who I really thought, out of all this crowd of worldlings, had something like regard for me—should turn on me, and accuse me about my little hat and dress !”

The youth was in a humiliating state of penitence. He was not satisfied, but he was ashamed. He had no answer ready. It was an excellent lesson, though, for him, for *that* day, at least.

“ It will do him good,” thought Jenny to herself, “ and will keep him in order. He was encroaching rather too much, and getting troublesome.”

The cavalcade soon resumed its march,

and Colonel Bowyer came back to the side of her pony. The conversation of that gentleman was a curious mixture of sneers, rough blunt speeches, and covert insinuations, which were a little hard to follow. But Miss Bell, in greater spirits every moment, quite kept up with him, and met this man of the world with such quiet indifference and good repartee, that it was no wonder he should say, later in the day to his friend, "That woman is a perfect little demon. And yet there is something about her." Poor Jenny, a "little demon!" It came to noon, and then to four o'clock. By that hour they had arrived at the famous ruins of Ben Tilbury. Then came a sort of bivouac; the elegant party halted, and scattered themselves about. The day was lovely. A little more artistic grouping, under suitable direction, and the whole would have suggested a Watteau picture. There was only wanting a few harlequins.

Then came the *al fresco* banquet, the elegant feasting—the champagne. Nothing more charming could be conceived. But, even here, it was remarked that the select

circle feasted apart, and, as it were, by themselves. They sat, as it were, in a reserved part. Almost a superior order of dishes was kept for them. There was no vulgarity of singing or loud clatter, or of good spirits, to mar the elegance. And *then* the "rabble" began to suspect the purpose for which they had been invited. Towards six they broke up and scattered again and wandered about the ruins. The sun was setting, it was the cool evening of a sultry day; and the outline of a portion of the dark ruins lay against a rich blazing back of molten gold. Mrs. Long of Eaton wandered about listlessly with three cavaliers; Mr. Long of Eaton had not been seen or inquired after since morning, and was possibly lost among the old ladies.

Mrs. Tollemache was now thoroughly disgusted with all the arrangements. "I now see," she said, loudly, "what the whole 'kit' of them were at" (that was the odd word she used). "My dear, that woman just wished to get our money and make a handle of us. I saw it from the beginning. Wait till we get home, if I don't make a raree-show of her. She is a mere low creature.

As for that Bell, I ask any one that's been looking on at her motions from ten o'clock this morning, is *she* fit company for decent women? *I* know what creatures she's fit for. Such behaviour with that man. No matter; see how it'll end. Just wait and see."

At this moment Jenny tripped up, followed by Colonel Bowyer. She was full of life, animation, health, and spirits. Perhaps even the glass or so of wine she had taken—taken, too, so early, and under that sultry sun—had given even an artificial impulse to her natural gaiety.

"Isn't it charming?" she said. "Don't we owe it all to Mrs. Long of Eaton? She has managed it beautifully."

"Beautifully, indeed!" said Mrs. Tollemache. "You ought to give her a teapot when you get back. Your friend is charming, I've no doubt. Of course, you do. *You've* had a fine day of it, my good lady."

"Well, I have, Mrs. Tollemache," said Jenny good humouredly. "I don't know when I have enjoyed myself so much."

"Then the day is not over," muttered

Mrs. Tollemache; "*I'll watch you, my good woman; nice pranks you have been going on with. Come to me, Julia,*" who had had a wretched day of it; "*keep close to me, away from those people. There seem to be all sorts let in here. Beautifully managed, indeed!*"

Jenny laughed. This droll old lady was not, indeed, worthy of serious battle. "*Quite an oddity,*" said she, gaily, to the faithful colonel.

The attentions of the faithful colonel had indeed been very marked through this portion of the day; it had excited attention among the guests. One gentleman, indeed, remarked to his friend that Jack Bowyer was "*hooked,*" he thought. Another had motioned with his eyes to Mrs. Long of Eaton very significantly, as the pair passed by.

"*Making a fool of her,*" said that lady, quietly and contemptuously. "*Most of us know Colonel Bowyer pretty well.*"

But there was a triumph in Miss Bell's eye which seemed to hint that perhaps she had already secured her captive, and which

gave great alarm to some of the ladies present. She had indeed kept the colonel in an agitation all day long by a kind of defensive and offensive piquancy, which was very agreeable. As the organisations of certain old Indians have to be awakened and stimulated by hot and fiery sauces, so was it with Colonel Bowyer, who had fought many campaigns of love and war. This woman, he said, perplexed him, puzzled and amused him.

"Let us see about these ruins," he said to her, carelessly. "(What a humbug they are!) But let us see where they lead to. How these vulgarians chatter! They deafen me. I wish we had a quiet place for ourselves."

"How charming the evening!" she said, walking on; "and the golden sun setting, and the glories of the firmament!"

"How well you do it!" said he; laughing. "It's like my old aunt teaching me my prayers—preaching me my prayers when I was a boy!"

"I am not ashamed of it," said she; "and you would find it very hard to laugh me out of it, Colonel Bowyer, or make me one of

your cold, worldly school. I am absurd enough to admire a fine sunset."

He laughed. This was what he liked. ("Touching her up, Pope, you know," he said to his friend. "G—d, I liked her when she turned on me in that way and fired up! 'Pon my soul I believe she was genuine.") "I never know how to take you; you come on me so dreadfully wicked. There! We have got rid of these infernal ruins. Let us get across this plank now, and see where this leads us to. I might break my neck down here, and I dare say you wouldn't care much."

"I should," said Jenny, looking at him steadily, "be sorry—that is to say, I should miss you. But I fear—judging of myself as I would of another person—after a day I should recover. Oh, as you know, I only have known you a very, very short time."

"Confound it," he said, impatiently, "what odd things you say! You blurt out the truth every way."

"Perhaps so," said she, stopping and looking round; "but where does this take us to?"

“We had better go back, hadn’t we, and do the propriety—eh? No, let us get to the top of this, anyway. They don’t start for an hour; and then there is to be tea, and all that infernal thing. I suppose you’d like to be back, for fear of missing the tea?”

“No,” she said, quietly; “but I suppose there is a view from the top of this.” And, starting off, she tripped up a winding path which led up a small hill, to see the view.

Colonel Bowyer was quite right; they were not starting for a long time yet. The company was languid and very happy. They were all scattered about within the ruins. The gentlemen smoked, sitting on fragments of the castle; the ladies did not object. There was an air of affection abroad; it had been a very happy day.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH.

A FATAL MISTAKE.

Soon the yellow sunset began to sink and grow cold, like a stage effect. The towers and ruins now lay on a dark background. The air began to grow a little chill. The tea was over; it was now to break up; the word went forth to bring the horses and carriages. Then came the mounting. There was an alteration in the positions of vehicles—just to give a little variety going back. Mrs. Long of Eaton alone kept her original company. Mr. Long of Eaton had been seen for a moment, so it might be assumed that he was all safe; no one, indeed, inquired. Just

as she had her foot on the steps of the carriage, Mrs. Tollemache came labouring up.

"Where *have* you been?" said Mrs. Long, looking up. "We haven't seen you all day."

"Oh, no matter about that, Mrs. Long; I did very well. I can get on very well without a mob of men—I can, indeed. Have you got all your company together—as many as you took out with you this morning?"

"I suppose so; really I don't know," said she, with a smile. "We hadn't a list, you know, Mrs. Tollemache. They are all grown and at years of discretion."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Tollemache. "Then where is that colonel? You wouldn't leave *him* behind, I suppose?"

"By the way, where *is* Colonel Bowyer?" said Mrs. Long, looking round. "I have not seen him this hour or two. Find him, some one."

"And you may as well ask, as you are about it, Mrs. Long, where *she* is, too—*your* ward—the *Bell* woman; I haven't seen her this two hours."

It now occurred to many other ladies and gentlemen to ask each other where were

these two members of their party. It was really odd—as Mrs. Tollemache had said, they had *not* been seen for these two hours back. They might wait a few minutes, while many Johns and Thomases ran back to look. Some one recollected them ascending that hill, and in that direction search was ordered to be made. John and Thomas reported presently that they could find “no signs on ’em.”

“Never mind,” said Mrs. Long of Eaton; “they’re gone on before, and we shall overtake them on the road.” And with this the procession started.

It was a charming drive and ride home, now it was all down hill. The low silvery laugh of woman (with a little fringing of champagne—ever so slight) was heard every now and again; but they never met Miss Bell or Colonel Bowyer.

“Good gracious!” said one of the gentlemen. “What if she had fallen down that precipice where the bridge crossed!”

“Likely, likely enough,” said Mrs. Tollemache, hoarsely. “Oh, likely enough. It’s not *that* precipice, anyway;” words spoken darkly

but with grim humour. And close on ten o'clock the cavalcade defiled on the open ground in front of the hotel. A few guests who had not gone were dotted about. A few more, who had arrived during the day, were on the steps wondering and maledicting their evil destiny at being just one day too late. They gazed in admiration on the almost bridal dresses of the ladies, the white cloaks, the shining ribbons, the marvellously festive hats. But the snowy Bristol-board dress was not among them. There was a greyness, not a darkness abroad; a light or two twinkled up and down. The sea seemed suffused with a leaden moistness, and was full of an inviting coolness. A charming tranquillity as if the watering-place had had a busy day's work, and was now resting, the great sea included, whose bosom was not to be disturbed by the splash and bathing. And over all the guests, too, who sat and stood on the steps and at the door, was a sort of Eastern languor, as of those who had gone through a day pleasantly yet wearily.

Mrs. Long of Eaton was among these, surrounded by gentlemen, with her parasol up

though the sun was gone, and actually in a fresh dress, suited to the time of evening. In every mouth, uttered loudly by some, by others with mystery, by others again with a sort of comic meaning, was a name that sounded like Bell. "A nice finish to the day!" "Most awkward!" "I don't believe it!" "Still, in any case, I don't see how it can be explained!"

But Mrs. Tollemache, with full eyes starting from her head, made her way over to Mrs. Long of Eaton.

"Now, what did I tell you? Isn't this a nice how-do-you-do? A pretty disgrace to bring on a party of pleasure! What did I say about that woman Bell? I hope you'll manage to get out of it, Mrs. Long."

Mrs. Long was seriously annoyed. There was truth in what Mrs. Tollemache had said. "You make a little too much fuss about Miss Bell's being a few minutes late. These things can be *made* serious if there are people good enough to make a noise and exaggerate."

"Oh, wait until to-morrow next day," said Mrs. Tollemache, using one of her favourite

phrases. "We'll see in good time. I've washed my hands of her, anyway. I am not going to have *my* mouth stopped. I said I'd expose her, and I will. A few minutes! Why, we're back nigh two hours now."

It really mattered not two hours, or one hour, or half an hour, for our poor Jenny. She might take as wide a margin as she pleased, once that fatal disappearance had taken place. The worst of the whole was the well-known and deserved reputation of Colonel Bowyer for many known facts of gallantry spread over many years. *There* was the real awkwardness. But almost as Mrs. Tollemache leaned to speak, the sound of wheels was heard, and a little carriage of the country was seen to come in sight. The little calèche was discovered to contain the missing Jenny and her gallant. There was quite a sensation on the open esplanade as they drove up. Colonel Bowyer helped out his companion, but quite another Jenny. She was full of doubt and confusion, as indeed was only natural, and the snowy Bristol-board dress of the morning was much

crushed. He, quite cool and collected, went up straight to Mrs. Long of Eaton, Jenny following. "Such an awkward business," he said; "went over the little plank, and up the hill to see the view. Then went on farther and lost our way—positively lost our way."

"Most unfortunate," said Mrs. Long, slowly; then eyed the unhappy Jenny from head to foot, and said: "Let us go in. It is too late for *us* to be out."

The drawing-room was lit up, and bright. The company were not at work at the piano or whist-table. They were tired, and engrossed by another subject. Colonel Bowyer, behind Jenny on the stairs, who was shrinking away from him, whispered hoarsely:

"You *must* go in, or they will talk; we must get it over." Under shelter of a family coming down from their room, the two delinquents entered. Eye-glasses went up, faces were turned towards them, there was even a marked cessation in the hum and chatter. It was an awful ordeal. Not for the colonel, who entered boldly, gave a meaning look

all round, as who should say, "Keep order and behave, or it will be worse"—walked up straight to a group. Jenny dropped into a chair beside some ladies whom she knew.

"So unfortunate," she began, softly; "the darkness came on, and we lost our way, just after crossing the plank——"

The lady next to her looked at her skirt as if it were creeping over with snakes.

"Where's mamma?" said this lady, without answering; and with a loud boisterous rustle had flown over to that parent. What was she to do? The situation was one of the most awkward in the world. Where there was a firm consciousness of innocence, some exertion should be made, and not be set down as mere forwardness.

On her other side was a gentleman—an elderly married man of the guild of white waistcoats and Boxer pattern. He had a fatherly, that is, a look that seemed as if it would be fatherly, to Jenny. She turned to him:

"A most unfortunate contretemps," she

said, plaintively ; “ Colonel Bowyer lost his way, and I——”

The white waistcoat then coughed twice or thrice.

“ I don’t know why,” Jenny went on, half crying, “ people seem to look at me as if some dreadful thing had happened ; but *could* any one help losing their way ?”

The white waistcoat told this afterwards very dramatically.

“ Only think of her asking me, could any one help losing their way ? Wasn’t it good ? Losing her way, you know, *morally*. But she didn’t see that.”

The eye of the white waistcoat’s wife was on him—an eye of menace. And with a “ ’Tis unfortunate—most unfortunate ; beg your pardon,” he rose and went away over to his wife. A virtuous man was not to keep such company.

Poor Jenny ! The worst was when Mrs. Tollemache swept by her with a triumphant gaze. Then the iron entered her soul ; for she knew that her enemy was pitiless and cruel. No wonder her heart sank, and that

with this crowd of cold, angry, hostile, contemptuous faces all bent on her, that she should lose courage, and feel the chill of despair. Even young Swinton, to whom she flung a mute appealing look, and even beckoned—even *he* became hardened, and passed on. They were all Levites, and left this poor bleeding traveller on the road. And, after all, for what was this cruel retribution enacted? The thing might have happened as described. Who could answer for Colonel Bowyer and his designs? But as for Jenny, in her snowy Bristol-board looking robe, all probabilities were in her favour. (We *must* take the legal and circumstantial view of the matter.) Did not she know the reputation of this dangerous colonel? Did not she know that her “little all” in life was to be a spotless name, and a virtuous reputation? Was she so foolish—so stupid—to put it at its very lowest? No; people who had wandered there, near the ruins, had before now lost their way. It was sadly unfortunate, but it might be the truth. Jenny felt all this, perhaps, and the hardship of the case; and with a cold sinking of the heart,

could have sank down on the floor and died.

But there was a good Samaritan in the room—a Samaritan with two daughters. He had seen a good deal of the affair—he had heard the whole from Swinton and others. His soft grey eyes moistened. *He* took the kinder view that has just been given. He had, in fact, all through, felt a generous sort of interest in Jenny as a “deserted, lonely girl,” and one who was “fighting her battles single-handed ;” he felt for her deeply. He was sitting between his two daughters, on the other side of the room, and looking over at her compassionately. He saw Jenny’s wobegone face and almost despair. Finally, he grew indignant.

“This is the way of the world,” he said to his children ; “they are always ready to be ‘down’ upon a poor girl, your fine ladies especially.” And they all looked over at Jenny.

From the poor girl everybody had shrunk away. There was an infected circle of many feet in extent round her. From a distance, haughty glances were fixed on her openly ;

and shyer faces glanced at her timidly, but with curiosity. Even the co - delinquent seemed to have cast her off.

"*Con-found* it," said his friend Pope to him, "look at the girl over there—cut by the whole crew! Hang it, don't let her be exposed in that way. A man should stand by her. 'Pon my soul I pity her!"

"Stuff!" said the colonel; "if there's a thing I hate—I loathe—it's this sort of publicity. There'll be a million stories in the morning—so stupid. It all comes of this infernal Welsh place. And I give you my oath, Pope, as I am a Christian and a living man, I know no more than the Gospel what it's about, or what's been done. We straggled on there, and lost the road. I'd have given a twenty-pound note to have found it. *I* didn't want to be saddled with a woman of that sort, and coming home here, like a fool with her, and having all these infernal old women turning up their eyes!"

"Well, just go over and speak to the poor woman, as she *has* done nothing."

"Oh yes, and make them talk more! I am sick of the business, and put out, and cured

of it. Most annoying, ain't it? Have kept clear of that sort of thing all my life, regularly;" and the colonel turned angrily on his heel.

Mrs. Long of Eaton was still more put out.

"Really I think he might have spared us this! A thing I took so much trouble about, to be turned into this kind of affair! They'll have it all up in town, I know. Really I thought that Colonel Bowyer—— And that wretched Mrs. Tollemache will bell it about everywhere!"

Gradually, therefore, the circle round Jenny was widening, and she sat a picture of despair—yet not without bravery. When she felt an eye bent upon her, she met that eye boldly and defiantly, and made it turn away. But she was sick at heart; she could have sunk into the ground, pursued by this cruel and undeserved calumny. She looked round helplessly.

To that look came an answer. The company, talking and whispering, and looking round covertly, heard steady steps, and then saw the tall figure of Mr. Lepell moving across

to Miss Bell. To their astonishment, he sat down beside her. The iron-grey face grew softer and kinder; he was no doubt whispering consolation. Presently the two girls came tripping over and sat down by the poor pariah. The father seemed a little restless at this, and looked from one to the other doubtfully; but the speechless gratitude in Jenny's round eyes overpowered every feeling. They talked to her kindly, and naturally, and affectionately. Here were three Samaritans at last; they had poured in the oil, and Jenny was now—her wounds bound up—seated on their mule, ambling away home.

This comparative "rehabilitation" had a curious effect on the throng. The popular fury seemed to be stayed for a time, or rendered uncertain. The blankness of desertion vanished from Miss Bell's face; she, indeed, felt the emotion of genuine gratitude. This she poured out, not formally, for between them there was a fiction of not knowing precisely the shape of the terrible offence for which she was persecuted.

All Jenny could say was: "How good this is of you—how good!"

It was, indeed, a service of value. It scattered uncertainty into the opposing ranks, though some ladies said they were surprised to see such piteous simplicity in a man—and in the nineteenth century! Another said, that men could do curious things, but really a man with daughters of that age ought to know something more of life. It would be a charity for some one to tell him. But Mrs. Long of Eaton seized on it as on a plank; it more or less saved her judgment that Mr. Lepell was a man who had seen a great deal of life. *She* did not wish to go into the question at all; it was scarcely a nice subject; but when a man of that sort, who doted on those two girls, saw nothing in the matter, they might assume that things were not *quite* so bad.

Thus, when the night was over, and the wearied commonwealth retired to its rest, the public feeling towards Miss Bell was confused and uncertain. But she was not the pariah she was at the beginning of the evening; the question was at least arguable.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH.

LEFT ALONE.

THE next day she came down fresh and charming—a little depressed, too, because conscious of the popular feeling. Young Swinton, who had passed a night of deep self-reproach and agony on account of his own baseness, drew near irresolutely to her. But Jenny met him firmly.

“You are one of those,” she said, boldly and half sadly, “that look out after the sunlight and follow it as it travels over the grass. I did not expect *that* treatment from *you*. Heaven help me!” (She did not, indeed.) “But I am glad of it now. The little persecutions that I have borne—and I see I shall have to bear—have helped me to know my real friends. You saw the

world—the world that caressed and flattered me—falling away, and of course fell away too. You were afraid that *you* would be compromised. I understand it. But there *were others, thank Heaven, of true metal.* I am not sorry—I say it again.”

“Oh!” groaned he, “how can you say these cruel things! You *know* I never meant anything. I thought you were angry with me—indeed I did. You *know* what you said to me yesterday.”

“Said to you!” said she, scornfully. “So you treasure up speeches, it seems. You were looking for a grievance, Mr. Swinton. *I see.* Very well, then—with all my heart. But I am not angry, though I speak in this way. I thank Heaven again for that mysterious law by which it supplies the loss of what is false—faithless—by what is true and holy!” And a sort of expressive—almost militant—devotion came into her face, and had young Swinton been anything of an artist, she would have suggested to him Joan of Arc praying before going out to battle.

He was so humiliated he could make no protest. Perhaps he felt that Jenny had

truly painted his worldly subserviency. She left him. The two girls, Helen and Lucy, were taking their sisters' walk on the Esplanade. They were tripping along in perfect harmony. The old Penwillion day was repeating itself. From afar off came every now and again the light splash. Their father was up-stairs in their sitting-room by himself, close to the open window, reading, or trying to read, but more often looking out listlessly to the great waste of blue sea outside. He was frequently glancing down at the two girls, who seemed to glide along below, and whom he would not allow to see *him*, though they looked up every time they passed; for he thought their constant smiling and nodding would only trouble him and interrupt their pleasant talk. Suddenly he heard a tap at the door, and he said, without turning, "Come in!"

The door was opened, not in the prompt way the servants opened it, but in a hesitating, alarmed fashion. "Come in!" he said, a little louder, and looked round. "Miss Bell! Goodness!" he added, rising.

She floated up to him, took his hand in both hers with a sort of reverence. "I do not know how to express myself," she said, "and I did not thank you perfectly last night; but it was not from want of gratitude—no, anything but that."

"Don't think of it," he said—"don't mention it, Miss Bell. Won't you sit down?"

"But I was ill—suffering," she went on. "I knew not what I was doing. Those cruel, unkind faces one after the other struck a chill to my heart. If looks could have stabbed, dear sir—Oh! And, after all, what had I done—what had I done?" asked Jenny.

Mr. Lepell felt for her, as he always did for the unprotected. "That is just what I said, and what I have asked. They tell me that you went to look at some ruins with a gentleman, and missed the carriages by a few minutes. I don't profess to follow these things. I have been out of the world this long long time; but it does not seem to me such a tremendous crime—not enough to keep me from standing forward in defence,

as far as my poor countenance will go, of any one whom accident or circumstance has for the moment removed from her friends."

"Oh, sir!" said she, bending down her head.

"And more," he went on. "Neither shall it keep me from going to others who may be prejudiced, and using the influence I may possess, to remove all such cruel impressions. I have lived abroad, and even in Pagan countries," he added, with some warmth; "but I could not believe that such a thing would occur in a Christian land. It makes me blush."

"Oh, sir!" said Jenny, bending lower than before, as though she were about to kneel, "this kindness—this goodness——"

"No, no," said he. "Don't, Miss Bell. It is nothing so great. But you must keep up heart, in the confidence that there are those who feel for you—my two girls—who, almost without knowing you, have a sort of interest in your welfare—and every one who is above the miserable and unjust prejudices of society—which *I* cannot understand."

“Ah!” said Jenny, in the saddest and most plaintive Gregorian monotone, “if I were rich, if I had money, if I had connexions and great friends, if I could dress finely, like some of those beautiful and charming ladies”—(she had, indeed, dressed “finely” only the day before, but that was for once and away)—“I begin to think I should have no enemies, and would not hear an unkind word. Unhappily, I am only a poor orphan, who must fight her own battle. There *was* one who, were she now alive, would have stood by me, and aided me with advice and with comfort. I could have told *her* all. With her left to me I could have despised their wretched tittle-tattle. I have no one to tell it to now. I must suffer in silence. *You*, dear sir,” continued Jenny, “could not have known her, or met. Had *she* been here, this could not have occurred.”

Mr. Lepell, perhaps, could not gather distinctly who this kind friend was, or what relationship she had to Jenny. But it was enough that her loss was deeply felt, and, as

it would appear, irreparable. This, too, seemed to strike a key-note in his own sense of hopeless desertion, and with kindly, almost swimming eyes he looked upon the poor girl who had no friends.

"You will find them, never fear," he said. "We will find them for you. There is justice in these people. They are good after all. Is there anything you would wish me to do specially?"

"Oh, sir," said Jenny, piteously, "how noble, how generous in *everything*. Even he—that Colonel Bowyer, who is the cause of all—and a word from whom——"

"Ah, Colonel Bowyer!" said Mr. Lepell, abstractedly; "to be sure. I did not think of him."

Every morning came round regularly the Departure—when there was paying of bills, and the stout, florid paymaster in the white waistcoat, whose only acknowledged function on these travels was to be a sure paymaster, was going along passages and down staircases with his hand nervously in his breeches-pocket. Then came the loading of the trucks which trundled the family

baggage away to the railway, and the bowing manager (ah, Miss Bell, no longer the luckless Bird!), and the outgoing ladies. Then were the intimacies with these "delightful people" cruelly broken up or rended, the delightful people coming out to "see them off," in all the warmth and enthusiasm of hotel friendship. Then was laid the foundation of those legends and sayings of those "nice people, Charlotte, we met at Penwillion," who would be so glad, "if ever you were passing through the south of England, to see you at our place, near Rigby." Those strange table-d'hôte friendships — so sudden and so ludicrously and unreasonably warm and intimate, but which cannot thrive out of a holiday. Let any one put it to the fatal test of driving up or writing to "our place at Rigby," and see with what wonder and coldness the awakened owner of Rigby, in the south of England, will receive the advance!

The Lepells were going away this morning. Their handsome luggage was in the hall. The omnibus was waiting. There were many who felt an interest in that

mournful, iron-grey father ; and a yet greater sympathy for the two "charming girls," who were too young to be so much overborne as their father was by so great a sorrow. Observers of character had noted all through the pretty conflict in their minds between what they felt was due to their own and their father's grief, and the growing attraction of the pleasant objects and enticing mode of life about. Even on those who had never spoken to them their presence had a silent charm. Their graceful figures, their devotional faces, their quiet air were sure to be missed. Even that worldly Mohawk, Mrs. Tollemache, who went through life hacking and hewing, and murdering everything that was innocent and pretty, said they were "pretty, harmless things, with no go in them, but still inoffensive"—very high praise from her.

Still they had little weight in the commonwealth, so very few saw them off, or knew of their going. Our Jenny was there, in deep grief. To do her justice, she never feigned tears or such demonstrations ; but there was a mournful despondency, carrying

with it an air of far greater truth. How many times she kissed the girls in that hall, how many times she had folded their pretty figures in her embrace up-stairs that morning, would be hard to reckon. It came to Mr. Lepell's turn. He took her hands kindly in his.

"Recollect now," he said, "that we look forward to meeting you again. Remember, you have promised. We like you, we have an interest in you, a genuine interest; and if you should meet with any troubles or annoyances, write to me, and we shall do all we can, if you will let us. We must get through our Welsh tour, for the doctors have ordered it for the girls. Then we shall go to one of the Spas abroad, where our friend Russell is to meet us. We shall expect to hear of you there. or then. Mind!"

There was indeed a deep interest looking out of his eyes. Nothing could exceed the deep sympathy of his tone and the earnestness with which he spoke. The two girls joined their voices. "Indeed, *indeed*, you must come!" Then came the inevitable but

soothing accompaniment of the fatal word "Farewell!" — "Write!" — "*Won't* you write?"

"How shall I ever repay you all this goodness?" Jenny said, looking from one to the other, *seriatim*. "I have not been half grateful enough." Then came more embracing. Happily we have that language where fluency fails us. There was just one more embrace, for here was the new manager saying respectfully that everything was "on." The trunks were on the top. The departing guests were inside. "Good-bye, dear, *dear* sir," again repeated Jenny, with deep feeling.

She *did* feel at that moment, for he had been kind to her; and though her rough worldly training had obliged her to ride roughshod over many emotions, she could not but be grateful.

"You promise?" said he.

Jenny shook her head. "I would give the world for such a vista of happiness. But what can I do? My fate is not in my own hands. But I will do my best to get even near to such good, kind"—they were

standing by themselves, so she amended it—
“such a good, *kind* friend as you have been
to me. I shall never, *never* forget it.”

Her voice trembled a little. Her eyes
seemed to fill. Mr. Lepell half turned back,
looking at her as if a new discovery had
made itself felt; but they touched him on
the arm.

“Time’s up, sir—very late as it is.”

Then there was a scraping on the gravel,
the great carriage rolled away, and Jenny
was left alone, to begin again, as she always
seemed destined to be.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH.

HOPELESSLY IN LOVE.

YOUNG Swinton, an honest, foolish boy, who should have been at his school, had witnessed this departure, and had taken a feeling leave of his friends. He had seen the way Jenny was affected, and was a little softened. He had hardly spoken to her for the last few hours. He was full of doubt and suspicion, and an undefined wounded susceptibility. And he was bitterly angry with himself for being "made such a fool of."

He was determined to "mark it" ostentatiously to Jenny; and still more for the benefit of the little public with whom he

lived. He wandered into the great drawing-room where were the books and newspapers, and the grand piano on which Miss Tolle-mache and other young ladies used to perform. He sat down in a soft arm-chair and began to read, looking out wistfully, now and again, on the bath of fresh air outside the window, and on the deep blue sea. He was even vexed at his discovery. Of course she would be trying her airs and coaxing ways upon him; but young as *she* might think him, he would show he had as much sense as any one else of his age, and would be glad to have the opportunity to show it.

There was now a rustle at the door, and one of the ladies of the place was coming to read, which would, of course, drive *him* out. It was Jenny entering hastily.

Instantly he had put on a stern, cold expression, and had even arranged his little plan; which was, after a moment, and after she had begun her little wiles and *agaceries*, to rise up with calm indifference and dignity, and go from the room. He promised himself an exquisite luxury in this retribution.

This was no more than a schoolboy's device,

and the almost comic drama of a schoolboy. Jenny gave a little start when she saw him ; she wished to read her *Times* quietly, and had her hand on that journal, but she saw who was there, and with a sort of grief and resignation forbore, gave up her purpose, and with a sigh glided gently from the room.

Thenceforth, exactly as if she wished to be *beforehand with his wishes*, she carefully avoided this young fellow. Not, indeed, with aversion, but under a sort of compulsion. The next day she met him in the great hall—he always coloured furiously when he met her—and she just spoke to him.

He could not help saying, with a boyish imitation of manly sarcasm, “You need not be in such alarm, Miss Bell ; I am not going that way.”

“Alarm !” said she, quietly ; “how little you understand. But you must not be seen speaking to me. I am a sort of contaminated person, according to Mrs. Long and her friends. Take care ; there is some one coming !”

“But, I say——” young Swinton said.

But Jenny had passed on hurriedly—almost fled.

It was indeed wonderful with what courage she had done battle against the “cruel set” that had been made against her. Now that her friends had gone she was almost helpless, and yet there was no bravado. Some of the men admired her “pluck” wonderfully. Her position was indeed awkward; and another, however innocent, must have given way, or at least withdrawn before these hostile symptoms. Even young Swinton, when he saw the triumphant and undisguised insolence of Mrs. Long and Mrs. Tolemache as they passed her, and Jenny’s modest but courageous look in return, felt a strong wish to go back to her; but he resolved to enjoy the luxury of being aggrieved a little longer.

He was a very “shy boy,” especially among rough-and-ready men of the world. Ladies encouraged and petted him—with them he was quite at home. Just after dinner of this day he was standing in the porch looking out towards the sea, and some

gentlemen of the world, whose intimacy or even notice he would have been proud to purchase at a very extravagant cost, were talking languidly. Mr. Pope was there, and some more. Here young Swinton caught some of their speeches.

"'Pon my soul, I like her," said one, "she is making such a good battle of it. All against the women, mind. She'll be a good bit too much for them yet."

"Will she?" said another; "I don't know that. They are all against her."

"But she is such a crafty, knowing, skilful little intriguer," said one, slowly, and in the deepest admiration, as if he were bestowing the highest praise. "So artful a schemer! As it is, she has cut out her work admirably. And yet a cold devil, a regular professional heart. You know. Knows how to screw money out of people."

Young Swinton's ears were tingling. This was pushing matters too far. Had this been said *to* him by any one, he would have defended his former acquaintance. After all, she did not deserve these calumnies, and it did seem to him ungenerous to sit by; but

he dared not say a word to those terrible men, of whom he was in such awe, and would have died of shyness at such an undertaking. Besides, he was her champion.

But there was another quiet young gentleman present, not more than Mr. Swinton's own age, who was reading a sporting paper, sitting on the bench close by. He did not know any of the party, excepting Mr. Pope a very little. He calmly rose up and joined them, and after a moment said :

"It is rather hard to set on a poor girl like that. I don't know her myself; but it seems to me the women here have determined not to give her a chance."

"Bravo, Monks!" said Mr. Pope. "The man who would stand by and see a lonely female in distress, is rather worse than the manly fellows who are down upon lonely creatures of this sort. Good Heavens! surely we all know that Mrs. Sandwich, and Mrs. Tollemache, and Mrs. Long herself, if they were carefully looked into—how would they bear it? Old Sandwich," said Mr. Pope, laughing, "wouldn't bear much looking into—her face, I mean."

“And a creature of this sort who takes to the road, or is driven out upon the road, mustn’t have a speck or a crack! Why, it’s absurd! For God’s sake, now, let her alone. She’s down now, anyway. And I must say, I think your friend Bowyer has been a little shabby, though.”

“I agree with you,” said Pope. “He’s a practical fellow, though, and there ain’t much chivalry in him.”

This generous defence, so impartial, too, as coming from a stranger, filled young Swinton with self-reproach. Now the dinner bell rang, and they had all to go in for the grand meal. Jenny sat modestly below the salt, without the least shyness or confusion, secure in the consciousness of her innocence.

“Cock her up!” said Mrs. Tollemache, in her loud horny voice, and with her glass up to her eye. “Cock her up, indeed! a shame to put her down with women of decent character. A cart’s-tail would be too good for her.” (It has been mentioned that this unmeasured language was habitual with Mrs.

Tollemache, and caused no surprise among her neighbours.)

After the dinner, young Swinton, still in trouble and self-reproach, and considerably staggered by the independent testimony to character he had heard at the hotel door, moved over undecidedly to where our poor Jenny was sitting alone and tabooed — as if she were in a moral quarantine. This constancy and courage was indeed surprising, and, to impartial observers, perhaps the best proof of her innocence. There she sat, one alone, as it were, in that crowded room, and affecting to read her book.

This spectacle, we must repeat, affected young Swinton, and by slow degrees, visiting a table here, a sofa there—in fact, as if he were climbing round the rocks of a little headland—he reached, in the most natural and *déagé* way, as he fancied, the point where Jenny was sitting. He thus dropped into a chair by her. In this public reparation he felt a sort of pride. Mrs. Tollemache had her eye-glass on him in a mo-

ment. "Just look at that boy!" she cried; "the woman Bell has got hold of him. Ugh! it's a shame. She should be just turned out into the street!"

But through her glass she now saw that Jenny had risen, and was leaving the room. The youth was looking after her in amazement. As soon as he had sat down, and had began, "Miss Bell, I want to——" she had whispered, "No, no! I must now go to my room. Good night!" and had passed out.

In about a couple of hours they had all broken up, and, towards midnight, the boy went to his room in no very good humour. On the table before him lay a little note—a gentle, retiring, persecuted-looking note. He wondered who this could be from, and read it. It ran :

"DEAR MR. SWINTON,—I have thought it better to write you this, as, unhappily, I am one of those who in speech or explanation cannot trust themselves, and fail to convey what they mean. At this time, too, I have so much to bear withal, with acting a show of indifference, and the loss of the few that

know and love me, and who seem dropping away one by one, that I am wholly unfitted to do anything like any other calm or reasonable being. Besides, you were once very kind to me in a *dreadful* strait—a kindness that to my grave I never shall forget. Never. For I had not a friend *then*; so what you did was doubly valuable. It is quite natural that since then you should be a little changed, and have gone with the current; though, indeed, I deplore it. Still, might you not, for that old service, have put in a word for me to-day, when cruel wicked men were talking of me in their light way? It was very generous of that strange gentleman—whatever his name was, and God's blessing go with him!—still, forgive me for saying such a thing, I had no title to expect anything *more* from you.

“The little debt, too—*too long owing*—is enclosed. Never shall I forget the value of that timely assistance—and let me show my gratitude in the best way I can, by asking you *not to speak to me any more*. It is not right that *you should compromise yourself*, more particularly in the case of one whom

you naturally suppose to have done wrong. I am *grieved* that you should think so ; but you are not to blame. And I now write in fear you should think my conduct to-day at all strange.

“ In a week I shall leave this place, most likely to *earn my bread*. I hope soon to see those dear friends who so courageously stood by me, and saw me through *everything*. It is only pure gold, they say, can stand the fire. I pine to see them ; but I have a duty here first ; to live down calumny. Do not think me unkind or ungracious ; but while I am here, you are not to know

“ Yours sincerely,

“ JENNY BELL.”

And inside this suffering envelope was certainly enclosed the notes of the amount owing to the youth. Where did *they* come from ? Were Mrs. Tollemache looking on, *she* would have explained it in her coarse way, “ Of course, every one can see she *traped* it out of those poor Lepell fools ! ” (What process the odd words “ *traped it* ” stood for, would be hard to say ; but those who knew

Mrs. Tollemache, assumed it to stand for chicanery of some sort.) "Maybe stole it," that lady would have added; but, luckily, Jenny had got her supplies that day.

The youth was indignant. "How independent she is getting," was his first thought; but what succeeded was a bitter feeling of reproach at her having heard of his silence when she was attacked. "I *ought* to have said something. It was unmanly. Even a stranger put in a word for her. No wonder she feels it. I am a shabby, cowardly fellow." And his head hung down before the glass in great penitence.

Still, he was pleased at the tone of the letter. No one had hitherto written letters or *explanations* to him. "She might have kept the money, though," he said. Then he went to bed, determined to have a sincere and sweet making-up in the morning. But all the next day there were difficulties in the way of this purpose. In the morning he wrote Jenny a note, a very short and simple one, as compared with hers, thanking her for the money, and went off on some expedition, a course at which our Jenny was a

good deal surprised. The letter, couched as it was, would have warmed any one else into a burst of enthusiasm, as, indeed, it ought to have done. But this *ingenuus puer* was crafty in his way. He thought of his mamma's advice, which he very often did when it chimed in harmoniously with his inclinations: "It is really high time that you should think of learning a little of the world;" and he was determined to show that he could carry out a little plan of his own. A large party, including the gentleman, a Mr. Rigby, newly arrived only the night before, who had "slandered" Jenny, had set out to visit the lovely vale of Poola-wiska. All the day he had kept near to this gentleman and his friends. They came home; the usual dinner was gone through, and, as they broke up, Jenny happened to pass near him, but he had hurried on with the rest. Perhaps this passed through her mind: "He is pretty much like all the rest. It is only what I have to expect."

At night she was not in the drawing-room when Miss Tollemache was sent to the piano

to give her well-known ballad, of which some of the company were now beginning to tire. "That old despot," said some of the gentlemen; "why is she let to force her girl and her songs upon us!" And one of them, who was near the door, actually took off the burden of Miss Tollemache's melody very humorously.

Her mother had heard the noise, and spoke out loudly against what she called "the low fellows" whom they had "let into the place."

When that day was done, a few of the gentlemen, as was customary, repaired to the smoking-room, where they had cigars and refreshing draughts from exploding bottles, and here, too, was Mr. Rigby, very fluent, and taking the lead in the conversation, and young Swinton, with his purpose, whatever that was, locked up within his soul.

He himself smoking a fat, strong, costly, and almost poisonous cigar (a course of which, within the next two or three years, nearly wore him into the grave), sat listening, until at last Mr. Rigby, who, as usual,

took the lead, and was listened to devoutly by admirers, began to talk on the subject young Mr. Swinton was waiting for.

"Where was little Roundabout to-day?" he asked. "I did not see her on her usual beats. Little Bell, I mean."

No one could tell.

"At some little game, I'll swear, inside the house. I'll back her against any one. She has more spirit than any one I ever saw. Why, hang it! after that break-down with Bowyer, no woman could have lifted up her head. What is she at, would you say?"

"Heaven knows!" his friend said. "She makes it pay, you may be sure."

"Gets a decent livelihood out of it, without doubt," said Mr. Rigby, laughing.

Young Swinton was in great agitation. The moment was come for a true champion to strike for his ladye. He drew forward his chair nervously.

"Are you speaking of Miss Bell?" he asked, with a voice full of tremor.

The other turned round, took his cigar out of his mouth, allowed the smoke to float

away up to the ceiling, and then said quietly :

“ Speaking of Jenny Bell ? Yes, of course.”

“ Because—because,” answered the youth, quickly, “ what you have been saying is not—not exactly the case. You have been misinformed. I know her well and intimately, and I tell you this, she has no game, as you call it, but tries to live as other ladies do.”

The other burst out into genuine laughter. “ Tries to live as other ladies do ! Indeed ? Well done, Jenny. Now, as her friend—her intimate friend—tell us how *that* is, do ?”

“ I don’t understand you,” the youth answered, turning very red. “ I know this much, it ain’t fair or manly to be taking away the character of a girl this way behind her back, and slandering a girl who is trying to—to——”

“ Live as other ladies do, ha ! ha !” answered the other. “ Well, sir——”

“ You are very strange,” said the youth, starting up, “ and I won’t have you laugh-

ing at me, I can tell you ; though you may with safety at a girl, *I* won't put up with it. Now."

The other leisurely pushed the ash off the top of his cigar. "I say, don't forget yourself, youngster. In fact, you *have* forgotten yourself; so take care."

One gentleman, who was, of the three present, nearest to the boy's own age, called out to him, "I say, Harry, don't make an ass of yourself. What on earth do *you* know about her? *Do* sit down."

"No," said Mr. Rigby, "let him stand up, if he likes. He is quite right to take up the cause of innocence and virtue. I like him the better for it."

"It's not *that*," said young Swinton, a little ashamed. "I may or may *not* know a girl ; but it isn't fair—and I appeal to any one—to be down on girls this way. Of course I know very little about her, except that I *know* she is good, and harassed, and persecuted."

Mr. Rigby stooped over to a friend and whispered to him: "What is this creature's name? Who the deuce is he?"

The other told him.

“Do you mean Lady Harriet?” He said nothing then; but later that night came up himself to young Swinton in a very friendly way. “By Jove! I have got a letter here from mamma! Look here, young man,” he said, showing him an envelope. “You know this writing, I suspect—eh?”

The other looked at it and started. “My mother’s!” he said. “Why, do you know her?”

“Got this only yesterday. Read it, if you like. Come close—see here;” and in a low voice he read: “Will you kindly look after my scapegrace son—just now and then, you know——” “That’s *you*, isn’t it? And that’s the return you would make me for my supervision—eh? I must really blow you up, though, for being so ready to take up the cause of every woman you meet. You a Guardsman, too, and to use such language, too! Why, if you had been older, and I not Lady Harriet’s friend—why, really, I could scarcely have——”

The youth hung down his head. “I know I was a little hasty,” he answered,

in a low voice ; “but you see she was so kind to me, and I pity her.”

“Very nice feelings, both, my dear boy, very ; but all I say is, keep your eyes open.”

“Oh, never fear me !” said the other, with wisdom. “I know where I am going, always. I can tell the sham thing from the real !”

“Then,” said the other, gravely, “you possess one of the most valuable gifts in the world.”

“Oh yes,” answered the other, “in *this* sort of thing I can see my road perfectly well. You’re not angry, I hope,” said the youth, confidently ; “I always say what comes into my head, and then it’s all——”

“My dear boy,” said the other aloud, and for the benefit of the room, “don’t say anything about it ; of course you didn’t mean it. No one *should* mean anything now-a-days. Have a cigar ; nothing cements a reconciliation like a cigar ! Now tell me about this charmer of yours. For, you must know, I am not prejudiced, and quite ready to change

my opinion. Now, *is* she so charming? What is her attraction?"

On this encouragement, the youth spoke out very freely and confidently—told of all his admiration.

"You know," he said, "I know her so well. She tells me everything; so that really you may trust what I say. And I do assure you, speaking to you as I do now, a more natural, unaffected, guileless girl you could not find. She is too simple, in fact. I wish, for her own sake, she was more wide-awake, you know. In fact, you were talking of what you called her 'playing a game.' I was really amused, for I knew how it really was, you know."

"To be sure," said the other. And, thus encouraged, the youth proceeded to dwell on Jenny's attractions, her goodness, her gentleness, above all, her delicacy. "I know what you sort of men take these women for; but now I'll just tell you a proof. I don't know whether you were here when that affair about the manager took place; but I happen to know," added the youth, glowing,

“the ins and outs of the whole transaction, and how her aunt was sick and forgot to send money, and a friend of hers came forward and lent it to her.”

“Oh, indeed!” said the other; “well, that looks like real delicacy.”

“I knew you’d say that,” the youth answered, eagerly. “She couldn’t help taking it. But, what did she do? I happen to know she paid it all back—every farthing of it—the moment her aunt sent it. That was like an adventuress, wasn’t it?”

“We won’t ask about the friend, eh?” said Mr. Rigby, knowingly; “no, of course not.”

“No, that wouldn’t be fair. I am bound in honour,” said the youth, with great satisfaction. “I must go now. But tell me. I have at least succeeded in removing some of your prejudices?”

“Oh yes,” said the other, “decidedly. You may sleep on that.”

When the ardent youth had his head on his pillow, a head which in truth was aching, and felt full of clouds, after that strong cigar, Mr. Rigby was talking to his friends

over him. "He is great fun," he said, "that little Leprechaun. It is pleasant to meet such freshness. But, as you will see, that knowing woman has him. The business is done. I must look after him at once. His mamma, Lady Harriet, has put him under my eye. Why, she don't dream of such a thing, and would really faint if she thought he had spoken to a creature of that sort. Poor boy! He was getting quite ill with that regalia."

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH.

THE "OLD SALT."

ON the next morning, when young Swinton was passing the hall, feeling now, indeed, a true man and champion, he heard a rustling behind him. It was Jenny fluttering down, as she always did, as though she were in great haste to keep an appointment. She started when she saw young Swinton, and, with a certain hesitation, ran to him. In her face was affection, gratitude, and a deep devotion.

"They have told me all," she said—"all. I heard of your noble conduct last night. It was so generous, so noble, and, indeed, I am not worthy of it. And oh, I trembled when

it was all related to me ! It might have gone on, and then——"

"And then," said the boy, smiling to reassure her, "what then ? I suppose I should have gone on. A soldier can't begin too soon. And, besides," he added, with triumph, "I hope you are *now* satisfied that I would not stand by and hear a word spoken against a friend of mine."

"Oh," said Jenny, "those foolish words of mine. They have been paining me ever since. I have laid awake at nights thinking of them. I did not mean to be unkind or unjust. Indeed, no. I own it, and beg to be forgiven."

Jenny looked so piteously pretty in this supplicating attitude, with her hands put together, that young Swinton answered her in a fervour of admiration.

"Dear Miss Jenny, don't talk in that way. There is one thing, though, I *can't* forgive. What you sent *in* your letter. What did I do to deserve *that*?"

"*That!*" said she, becoming grave—"that was of course. I must have my little pride. Till I die, I never shall give *that* up. But

we are friends now? We have quite made it up now, and I am forgiven?"

"Nonsense!" he said. "How jolly this is! Do you know, I have been quite uncomfortable, too; for you were a little cold to me."

A sailor now touched his hat at the door. "Shall the boat come up here, sir?"

"Ah, to be sure," he said. "I am going to have a sail. I wish *you* were coming."

"What, and are you going in one of those *open* boats?" said she, in a fright. "You must take care. Promise me."

"Oh, never fear," he said. "*I* am all safe."

"I don't know," said Jenny, doubtfully. "I begin to wish we hadn't made friends until you came back."

"Do you?" said he, gratefully. "And I tell you what, as I want us to be greater friends still, I shall *promise* to take all care of myself. There!"

Jenny sighed and put her hand out. "Ah! I have an instinct that we shall never be greater friends, or friends at all—for long."

"Why?" said he.

"There are such things against it. You

see, there was one last night, whom I never spoke to in my life, and yet *he* set himself to abuse me."

"Ah! but I didn't tell you," said he, wisely. "Who do you suppose Rigby turned out to be? An old friend of my mother's, Lady Harriet's. When he heard how it was, and saw how the thing stood, he all but apologised. My mother, it seems, had told him to look out for me, but he had forgotten it."

Jenny was in deep thought. "So he is your friend now?"

"Yes," he said. "I brought him round, and I shall make him your friend, too."

She shook her head. "Then I see; and I say again, I have an instinct our friendship will not last very long. No matter," said Jenny, putting out her hand; "these are dismal reflections, not suited for a fine day. Enjoy yourself, dear Mr. Swinton."

He went off in great spirits. The sea monster who waited for him noted his light step and his smiling to himself, and was complimentary. "If we 'ad that 'ere young lady aboard, sir—and I'm thinkin' she

won't be loth to come ! I see all that about her eye. Tom Humphry, sir, has 'ad a good many ladies with him in the *Sally*."

He had a very pleasant day, but dreamed, as it were, a good deal, while Tom Humphry, this grim and ancient "Salt," "sailed" the boat.

And Jenny bathed, and was noted by the gentlemen in the cliff-stalls, and came home defiantly with her hair down on her shoulders, past whole ranks of virtuous and offended matrons.

"She's as brazen as a barmaid," said Mrs. Tollemache, from under an enormous umbrella-shaped straw hat. "It's going beyond the beyonds. She ought to be just taken and handed over to the police. We can't take our daughters to any place now."

In the evening and at dinner, our youth, safe home from his sail, was at her feet. By a little intrigue his chair was put next to hers. He was in high spirits, and jocular upon this subject. "Curious coincidence, wasn't it?" he asked. "The way things come about, you know." Then he told her all his day's adventures. At night, in the

drawing-room, he sat boldly beside her, quite elated at having "cut out" all the other men with so "fine a woman." But there were some amused glances, which Jenny might have seen too, passing round. Jenny whsipered to him she was so happy, but that she was sure it would not last long. From afar off the virtuous matrons snorted and sniffed propriety, and called over their daughters when they passed too close to the infected quarter. By the end of the night Jenny had consulted him, received his dicta as gold, had been instructed, had told him her thoughts, and had heard a deal of his amiable prattle about his place, prospects, and his mamma. There *was* a papa, it was true, and he, Jenny said, she felt sure she could like almost at first sight; which was, perhaps, also true. Mamma Lady Harriet, Jenny was equally sure, would take a dislike to her, and would not *allow* her son to love—like she meant—*her* (that is, Jenny).

He was indignant at this feeling. "We owe much to our parents," he said, in a sort of La Bruyère manner, "but they cannot control our feelings and emotions. It is

beyond their province. But she must know and love *you*. When we get you to come down to Maxwelton, she will be quite fond of you, I know."

Jenny at Maxwelton, indeed, under the cold sergeant's eye of Lady Harriet! But she smiled at the prospect. "Ah, that will never be!" she said.

The youth assured her it *would* be; that Maxwelton, "one of these days," was to be all his, and then——In short, we know the tune and the notes, and how the old air is played again and again. Our young Swinton was getting infatuated, as it would be called, and this night, beside Jenny's arm-chair, advanced him a good way along that flowery road. Nor must we be hard on him. True, the vindictive dowager said she "was double his age, my dear;" but these *grandes passions* for those who are little older than us are quite intelligible

And the text was well commented on by a gentleman of experience in the smoking-room. "I never *could* care," he said, "for your limp 'slobs' of girls, fresh from the nursery,

sucking the tops of their fingers, and for all the world like human spring chickens. They have no minds, you see, no training, no piquancy, you see. I positively get ill in their company. No, a well-formed, steady, handsome creature for me, that has seen life and training—massive, elegant, firm in mind and figure. Not a human platitude, or a tender bit of nursery gristle, or a——”

They all roared out at him. This was very “coarse” talk. But the speaker was a man of the world.

The next morning young Swinton rose with a very sweet sense of life. This was, indeed, the first day that he regularly felt that he was what is called “in love.” He sat at the breakfast-table opposite, and cast at her curious glances, colouring if he thought that any one was looking towards him. He felt very tranquil and very happy, and full of delightful schemes and plans for the future. Even in some laws that Jenny had imposed upon their friendship there was a mystery not unacceptable. For there was

to be a little restraint in public, to avoid the persecution which, hitherto, it had been her unfortunate destiny to encounter.

He was going out after breakfast in his open "sail-boat," and Humphry, the unprepossessing old Salt, was already waiting in the hall. He certainly had not the same enthusiasm for this sport that he had yesterday; but still, after a short leave-taking of Jenny, whose lips seemed to move in audible prayer for his safety, he "went aboard," as the Salt put it.

This child of the ocean, not always tolerable to him, from a "spirituous" manner which was habitual to him, and an inclination to tyrannise "aboard" his craft, now almost recommended himself by renewing the truly delicate compliments and rallyings of the preceding day. "If we only 'ad a certain young lady aboard, a sittin' where you are a sittin', sir, or alongside, with her 'and on the tiller, how we'd get along spankin', sir! Ah, my!" and the old Salt shook his head significantly, and squeezed his old mahogany eye close.

Ruminating pleasantly, the youth sat and

looked at the blue water drifting by. There was a fresh breeze out, and the waves "hissed" as the boat lay over on its side, and cut through the waters. Thus they passed along a good strip of coast, and beyond the headland which shut in the bathing. But the bathing had not yet commenced. Then they turned, and the Salt proposed fishing, to which the youth consented with indifference. "There was a son o' mine," he said, as he got out his lines, "now aboard a manner-war, as took out his girl in this werry boat, and along the werry bench you're sittin' on now. They went out at about no more than ten—just such a day as this—and they come back about one—the girl and he. Fishing, you know. But they didn't bring any fish in. Nor, for that, did I expect it. No, no, no!" And again he closed the mahogany eye.

"What on earth do you mean?" said young Swinton.

"Why this, sir," said the Salt, slowly. "Boatin' and marriage goes all together. Fishin' and marriage comes past the Pint,

jib and jib together. My son and his Sally sat where you're sittin' now, sir, and where, as you and your 'oner's Sally might be sittin' with her hand on the tiller, bringing round the boat's head to the wind, easy and graceful——"

"Why, good gracious!" cried young Swinton, starting up, "if there isn't—— Hand me that glass, will you?" And he looked eagerly towards the shore, from which they were not very far away.

What had he seen? There was, indeed, a maiden sitting on one of the high cliffs, dressed in a white straw hat, and reading. Here was a surprise. It was a couple of miles from the hotel, shut off into a delightful privacy by the headland.

Suppose — taking the Salt into confidence—something in the nature of a surprise could be managed? Suppose that "the craft" could be run deftly ashore on the low strand, behind a rock, without attracting observation, and our amorous youth landed? The co-operation of Tom Humphry, that true-hearted and sympathising mariner, would not be wanting, who was ready with

all alacrity to "put him alongside o' his Sally"—a generic title he persisted in giving to Jenny.

It was soon done. Our hero was landed without in the least attracting the reader's observation. It had all the air of an adventure and a surprise. No one could have reckoned on a landing on that part of the coast. Indeed, the Salt declared impressively that he had been "hon and hoff that coast for years, man and boy, and had never known such a thing done afore!"

Naturally, Jenny, thus surprised, gave a faint cry of alarm; naturally, the colour came to her cheeks at seeing her gallant young admirer, who had scaled the cliff to lay himself at her feet. Even in the secrecy of the proceeding there was something delightful; for Jenny was every moment looking round, timorously apprehensive that they might be seen by some of her "persecutors." "*You* know," she would say, "what they would make of this."

It was a charmingly bright day. The sun was out, and bathing all the yellow cliffs about and around them in light. The

quiet blue sea below was, as it were, "lounging" along the strand, like one of the vapid exquisites who came down for his health. The little boat, with its white sail half folded, drifted softly below, like a nautilus. The Salt was dozing in the stern. As far as *he* was concerned, the lovers might wait the whole day.

By-and-by they were coming down to the strand. Why should not Jenny try the sea, just a "short sail," merely for the fun of the thing? No one would see—no one would know or even guess, and they would effectually "do" the eager gossips of the place. Why not, indeed! Jenny, though she notoriously disliked the sea, might well make this little sacrifice for her enthusiastic admirer.

The Salt, seeing how matters stood, seconded their efforts with surprising alacrity. Matters were evidently approaching the relation which had existed between the man-o'-war's-man and the original Sally. Performing prodigies of seamanship, he brought his "wessel" well in upon the strand, and

extemporised a sort of bridge for the lovers to "come aboard." He held out his tortoise-coloured hand to Jenny with an encouraging air. "I'm proud on you, miss," he said, "as a passenger. Sit there, miss. What was I saying to his 'oner afore you came on? That we 'ad a sun, and a sail, and a breeze—but we only wanted a lady's 'and on the 'elm. My son's Sally—many years a manner-war'smun—sat on the spot where you're a sittin' now, with *her* 'and on the 'elm, which was a *sure* weather sign, for within less than a born week——"

"Now, get up the sail, Humphry," said young Swinton, impatiently. "Don't let us lose time."

"Leave it to me," Mr. Humphry replied, closing the mahogany eye—"leave it to me, sir; I know where to go. I'll take you beyond heyes, and Tell-us-cups, and kuroosity. Here we go—up with her!"

"What *does* he mean?" Jenny asked, timorously; and she shrank closer to her admirer.

It was a charming sail. It would almost

appear that Jenny had never been out on the water before. At least, as she explained, "in *that* sort of boat."

The Salt, from the edge of the bows, looked over now and again with his favourite motion of his mahogany eye, to hint that everything was taking place after the old immemorial Sally precedent. They "stood out" well, and every now and again "went about."

At last it was full time to come in. It was four o'clock. "And see, Humphry," said young Swinton, with an air compounded of mystery and authority, "get us ashore about the same place—sheltered, you know."

"Ay, ay, cap'en," said the Salt, meaningly; "leave it to me. Down beyond the Tell-us-cups. Ay, ay, cap'en. Now we go about."

The lovers were not attending. Young Swinton was describing Maxwellton to her, and the estate, alluding incidentally to his mother, Lady Harriet, about whom Jenny, strange to say, was far more interested. A breeze had got up. The boom swung over

in the usual way. Jenny was next to it—and the rude rough beam came full on her delicate neck and shoulder, and struck her on the side of her head. True, young Swinton had caught it, and deadened the shock, nearly dislocating his own wrist. One faint shriek, and Jenny was lying half insensible, with eyes closed and blanched cheeks. With a frantic denunciation of the old Salt, young Swinton was trying to restore her. And yet the Salt was scarcely to blame. He had given timely warning—had "sung out," "Look out, cap'en!" And, if Jenny had dipped her head, as she had done periodically many times before, and let the boom swing over, there would have been no mischief.

She must have been cruelly hurt. Fancy the shock of a slow heavy boom coming against a tender neck like hers! Young Swinton made passionate efforts to restore her, but it seemed as though her senses would never return. At last she sighed; consciousness was returning. The Salt threw water on her face in a rude but efficacious

way. He began to relate—but no one attended to him—how once, in precisely the same way, the “manner-war’sman’s Sally” had——

Jenny had come round. She bore it like an angel. She reassured her admirer with her angel’s smile. “It was not *your* fault,” she whispered. “No; indeed it was not.” No one had thought it was. Not even the Salt. But the youth took it on himself, passionately. It was—it was—it was all *his* stupidity and clumsiness, though the poor lad’s wrist was black and strained. But Jenny’s neck and shoulder was in great pain. Her head was all “confused,” as if “the waves were inside.” The Salt from the forecastle hoarsely suggested “a drop.” They were now back at the fatal landing-place. With infinite difficulty she was got ashore. The point was to elude the prying eyes of the gossips, for what would they not make of this adventure? How would she get home? But here it was that the fine *moral* quality of Jenny came out. She would walk—battle with the flesh—triumph over suf-

fering, though very faint. He would send a carriage—an idea that filled her with terror. Not for the world. Could she walk, assisted by him? Not for the world, either. She would make an effort, walk by herself alone. With anguish, young Swinton saw that this was the only course, "for both their sakes," as she put it; "if those terrible women, Mrs. Long or Mrs. Tollemache, saw her, they would tear her like cannibals." Then she said, distractedly: "It was wrong; we should not have done it. It was a moment of weakness in me. Heaven help me through it!" And she seemed to pray for spiritual aid and comfort, although it was evident she was at the moment racked with pain.

With difficulty but infinite resolution, she made her way home without being discovered, the prayers of the youth following her. Without being discovered? Mr. Rigby was the possessor of a surprising glass called "The Mountaineer," which he was very proud of, and, taking a walk on the heights, had made out this very yacht in the distance below him. "The

Mountaineer," which brought out objects with a startling vividness, revealed the whole deck of the little craft at the critical moment after the boom had struck our Jenny, and had shown the youth with his arm about her, trying frantically to bring back life and animation. His comment was simply a long-drawn and astonished "By Jove!"

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

